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Jeremy Collier, A.M.

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12. Dec
1296

SEVERAL
DISCOURSES
UPON
Practical SUBJECTS.

THE
ARGUMENTS

Of which may be collected from

The CONTENTS.

The SECOND EDITION, with
Enlargement.

By JEREMY COLLIER, A. M.

L O N D O N:

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SERMON I. 2 Cor. v. 10.

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SERMON



S E R M O N I.

2 COR. V. 10.

*For we must all appear before the
Judgment-Seat of Christ; that
every one may receive the Things
done in his Body, according to
that he hath done, whether it be
good or bad.*



A N K I N D was never so
happy in the Majority, as
to be kept in Order by a
bare Reverence for Virtue.

'Tis true, there are few
but upon Occasion will talk in Commen-
dation of Justice, Generosity and Kind-
ness; and would take it ill if we should

B

not

not believe them : But when any private Interest or Humour crosseth upon them, and puts them to the Tryal, 'tis too apparent what a slender Hold Morality has upon them, and how little they are to be trusted : And therefore, to meet with the Insincerity, and restrain the uncouptable Passions of Men, Laws were chiefly invented : The Design of these publick Provisions being to make all Injustice and Encroachment an uncreditable, as well as an unprofitable Practice ; and that the Punishment of an ill Action should always exceed the Pleasure of it : That those who were not generous enough to be govern'd by Reason and Humanity, might be disciplin'd into Duty and Order by Smart and Sense. But here it must be confess'd, that humane Constitutions are not sufficient to provide an effectual Remedy : For, not to mention, that many Vices are always overlook'd, and lie out of the Verge of the most comprehensive Laws ; even those Crimes which are mark'd with Vengeance in the Sanction, often escape the Execution ;

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the Offenders being either too cunning to be discover'd, or too powerful to be punish'd. Therefore, that Men may be sensible of the Vanity of relying upon Force or Fraud, that they may not fancy they can either over-reach, or master Justice; God has declar'd, that he will at last take the Matter into his own Hands; that he will correct the Irregularities, and supply the Defects of human Judicature; that he will *judge the World in Righteousness*, and take an exact Review of the Actions of Men. And in order to the passing this full and final Account, the Apostle tells us, *We must all appear, &c.*

From the Words I shall endeavour in the first place,

- I. To prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come.
- II. I shall describe the Solemnity and the Terror of it.
- III. I shall shew the Impartiality of the Sentence. And,
- IV. The Reason of the Appointment.

B 2

I. I shall

I. I shall briefly prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come.

I. From the general Consent of the World. There is scarce any Religious Truth, excepting the Being of a God, in which Mankind have more universally agreed than about a future Judgment. This was acknowledg'd by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by *Greeks* and *Barbarians*; and scarce any but the *Sadducees* and *Epicureans* question'd it. This we may learn from *Josephus*, from *Plato*, and *Tully*: And *Justin Martyr* tells the Heathens, " That this Doctrine of an Account to be pass'd after this Life was no politick Device, contriv'd to keep the ignorant Multitude in Awe; no *chimerical* Fancy peculiar to their Poets, though they were their first Divines; no, 'twas maintain'd by their most eminent Philosophers, by Men of the strictest, and most inquisitive Reasoning ". *Tertullian* proves the same Thing, not only from the Writings of the Heathens, but from their familiar Expressions

Apolog.

preffions and Conversation. " And the
 " Soul (says he) though she is oppress'd
 " with the Burthen of the Flesh, byass'd
 " by an unfortunate Education, disabled
 " by vicious Habits, and debauch'd by
 " a false Religion; yet when she recol-
 " lects herself, when she shakes off her
 " Lethargy, and recovers into some lu-
 " cid Intervals of Thinking and Sobriety,
 " then she owns the Unity of the Di-
 " vine Nature, appeals to God as a Judge,
 " and declares her Expectations of Retri-
 " bution from him". This Acknow-
 ledgment the Father calls the Testimony
 of one who is naturally a Christian.
 When St. *Paul* told the *Athenians*,
 that God had *appointed a Day in which*
he would judge the World in Righteous-
ness; though some of them laugh'd at
 the Resurrection as a new and incredible
 Doctrine, yet they had nothing to say
 against a Day of Judgment. The gene-
 ral Belief of this Truth is that which
 establishes the Authority of Conscience;
 this makes its Tribunal so considerable,
 and gives Force and Majesty to all its

Censures: For why should the Thoughts of Men naturally *accuse* or *excuse* one another, by reflecting upon the Law written in their Hearts? Why should the Consciousness of an unreasonable and wicked Action make a Man uneasy when none knows it but himself? Why should this happen, if his Mind did not strongly suggest, that God will *bring every secret Thing into Judgment, whether it be good or bad?* And when a Man's Guilt is of a heinous and extraordinary Nature, the Lashes of Conscience are proportionably severe; it breaks through the strongest Guards, makes its Way into the closest Retirements, and strikes without Regard to Persons with an impartial and inexorable Justice. In such cases no Power can over-awe it, no Pleasure can charm it, no Business can divert it. This made *Tiberius* pine away with Anguish in the midst of Empire, and confess that he thought himself as miserable as the Gods could make him. The dismal Expectation of a future Account pursues the Wicked where-
ever

ever they go, fills their Minds with Images of Horror, wakes them from frightful Dreams, and makes them a Kind of Apparition to themselves: This makes the Murtherer turn his own Accuser; he chuses rather to fall into the Hands of Justice than lye under his own, and flies to an Execution as a Refuge from his Conscience. If it be demanded, why those that have such dreadful Apprehensions of the other World should make so much Haste thither, which is only to *torment themselves before their Time*: To this I answer, That when Men lye under such inexpressible Agonies, their Minds are too much disorder'd to reason from sedate Principles and Chains of Discourse; they act by uneven and furious Impulses, by Starts and Convulsions of Thought. Impatience makes them rather venture any thing than endure what they feel: This sometimes puts them upon being their own Executioners, hoping by a desperate Sally upon themselves to extinguish their whole Being, and dispatch Soul and

B 4

Body

Body together. Thus on the other side, when they can acquit themselves as to the main, when they can give a fair Account, or suffer in a good Cause, they usually leave this World with great Evenness and Satisfaction, and bear up against the harshest Circumstances with singular Fortitude and Unconcernedness: They have naturally a secret Presage that Providence will appear for them afterwards, that Folly and Violence, and Injustice, will domineer only in this Life; but that Reason and Honesty will be consider'd in the other. This Persuasion buoys up their Innocence, and supports their Spirits, and hardens their Resolution, and makes them almost impregnable against all Accidents and Injuries. This Consideration made *Socrates* appear so great and so graceful at his Trial; the Hopes of appearing before more equal Judges after Death, where his Cause would be re-heard and justify'd made him despise the Malice of his Enemies, disdain the Meanness of escaping Prison, and drink off the mortal Draught with as little Concern,

cern, as if it had been at an Entertainment *. This Doctrine of a Judgment to come we see may be in a great Measure made out from the Remorse and Applauses of Conscience, and has gain'd Ground where there was nothing but natural Reason, and the Attributes of God to prove it. And as *Plato* observes, "That those Men who burlesqu'd
 " the Belief of Heaven and Hell in their
 " Health, when they came to dye they
 " had violent Apprehensions of the Re-
 " ality of these Things; and if they were
 " guilty of any heinous Misdemeanors,
 " they usually went off with great Dis-
 " order and Amazement". And since God intends to judge the whole Race of Mankind (as I shall prove farther by and by) it is very reasonable to suppose, that this Decree of Providence should be either discoverable by the Light of Nature, or reveal'd to our first Parents, and so kept up by a general and un-interrupted Tradition. For if all Men

* Plato Apol. Socratis.

are to be judg'd, then they ought to prepare themselves accordingly; and if so, it's but equitable they should be acquainted there will be such a Day: For to summon Men before such a dreadful Tribunal without giving them any Notice; to consign them over to a State of Misery in the other World, without acquainting them, that they should have either Punishment or Being after Death to condemn them to Hell, when they had no Reason to conclude there was any such Place, is a very incomprehensible sort of Justice, and by no Means agreeable to the Perfections of the Divine Nature. And therefore, if there will be a future Account, in which all Mankind will be deeply concern'd, then there must be some universal Principle to prove this important Truth; so that none may be ignorant of it without their own Fault. But,

2. To prove the Certainty of a Judgment to come more incontestably, let us consult the sacred Writings. He that made the World can best inform us
how

how it will be dispos'd of; he has Omnipotence to back his Decrees, and therefore his *Counsels* and Appointments must *certainly stand*. Now the Scripture affords us as exprefs Declarations to this Purpose as is possible: Our Saviour himself assures us, that the *Hour is coming* John v. 29. *in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth; they that have done Good unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* His Apostle St. Paul Acts xvii. 31. speaks with the same Plainness to the *Athenians*, That God has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness. And we are told in the Text, That we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, &c. St. John had his Imagination fill'd with so strong and lively an Idea of this great Appearance, that he describes it almost as particularly as if it had been already past. *I saw* (says he) *a great white Throne, and him that sate on it; from* Rev. xx. 11, 12, 13. *whose Face the Earth and the Heavens fled*

fled away, and there was no Place found for them: And I saw the Dead small and great stand before God; and the Books were opened, and the Dead were judged out of those Things which were written in the Books: And the Sea gave up her Dead, and Death and Hell delivered up their Dead which were in them; and they were judged every Man according to their Works.

I proceed now in the second Place,

II. To describe the Terror and Solemnity of this Judgment, from the following Circumstances.

1. From the Suddenness of it.
2. From the Vastness of the Appearance, *We must all appear, &c.*
3. From the Majesty of the Judge.
4. From the dismal Alteration which will then be made in the World.

1. From the Suddenness of it.

This Day of the Lord will come, the Scripture tells us, *like a Thief in the Night*, when all Things are wrapp'd up in Silence, in Sleep and Security. The last

last Age shall be as much surpriz'd at the burning, as that of *Noah* was at the drowning of the World. They will be eating and drinking, buying and building, projecting glorious Designs, and engag'd as eagerly in the Business and Entertainments of Life as ever: And when they cry *Peace and Safety*, promise themselves vast Returns from their Undertakings, and think their Prosperity impregnable; then the fatal Day shall rush in unawares, and overwhelm them with swift and irresistible Destruction. When the Voluptuous are revelling in the *Excess of Riot*; when the Ambitious are grasping at Power, making themselves great by Slaughter and Desolation, and raising their Trophies upon the Misery of their Neighbours; then they will have all their Enjoyments, all their Hopes unexpectedly ravish'd from them, and see their Conquests swallow'd up in the universal Ruin. When the Atheists are prophanely arguing against the making of the World, and drolling upon the solemn Prediction of its Dissolution; they shall

shall then receive an unlook'd for, and demonstrative Proof, and be convinc'd by Sense and Confusion. For as far as we can learn from the Holy Scriptures, Men will have no Warning given them of this mighty Change; there will be nothing extraordinary in the blazing of Comets, or the Production of Monsters, or the Frequency of Earthquakes, or the Apparition of Spirits; there will be no apparent Weakness upon the Body of Nature, no Marks of Age, no mortal Symptoms of Dissolution: The Sun and Moon will give their accustom'd Light, the Seasons will keep their Course, the Strength and Beauty, and Order of the whole Frame will continue; so that to look upon the World one would think 'twas built for ever. And yet when Nature seems thus vigorous and strong, thus healthy and well complexion'd, 'twill then sicken, and sink on the sudden, and expire as it were in an Apoplectick Fit. Now all unexpected Calamities are the greater for being such; because in such cases a Man hath not Time to summon

summon in his Strength, and put himself in a Posture of Defence; his Reason is so astonish'd with the Surprize, that he can't take a distinct View of the Bigness of the Evil, so that it appears infinite to his confus'd Imagination. And that which makes it still more afflicting is, that Men have often Reason to conclude, that the Misfortune might have been both foreseen and prevented by a wise Conduct; and that it's their own Fault that they are surpriz'd. And if the Misfortunes of this Life are made much more troublesome by the Suddenness of them, how must the Terror of that Day be heighten'd by this Circumstance, when the Face of all Things will be amazing, when the Miscarriage will be too irrecoverable for any Contrivance to retrieve, and the Misery too great for Patience to bear!

2. Another Circumstance which adds to the Solemnity of this great day will be the Vastness and Universality of the Appearance. Here will be a general Assembly of Persons of all Ages, Countries,
and

and Conditions. All the Sons and Daughters of *Adam* will be summon'd into this great Assize; none will be so great as to be excus'd or so mean as to be overlook'd; no Proxies or Representatives will be allow'd, but every one must appear in his own Person, *high, low, rich and poor, one with another.* And to make this mighty Concourse the more remarkable, it's likely those who have had any Relation, Intercourse or Concern in this Life; those who have oblig'd or outrag'd, reform'd or debauch'd their Neighbours, shall be rang'd as it were within View, and brought to a Re-acquaintance with each other. And if so, where will the *Sinner and the Ungodly appear*? How will the unrighteous Judge be abash'd when he is confronted by those he has unjustly condemn'd? How will the Oppressor turn pale when he sees those he has harass'd out of their Right, and robb'd of their Ease and Satisfaction? What Shame and Confusion must sit upon the Face of those who have slander'd the Memories
of

of the Dead, betray'd their Trusts, forged their Wills, and abus'd their Relations, when they are forced into the Presence of their Friends they have thus deeply injur'd? What unacceptable Company must those be at their second Meeting, who, like *Simeon* and *Levi*, have been *Brethren in Iniquity*, and who have enflam'd each other into Cruelty and Outrage, combin'd for publick Violence, and sacrific'd Towns and Kingdoms to their Revenge? How will the *Alexanders* and *Cæsars*, and all the *Nimrods* of the Earth curse the Madness of their Ambition, when those Thousands of Orphans and Widows they have made appear before the Throne against them? How will they be astonish'd, when whole Armies, and whole Nations of murder'd Men stand round (for Vengeance) about them? So, on the contrary, what a reviving Sight will it be, to meet with those whom we have reliev'd in Necessity, reduc'd from Error, recover'd from Vice, rescu'd from Oppression, and defended from unjust Reproach? Such Per-

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sons

sons will look like Guardian Angels about us, and fortify us against the Terrors of that dreadful Day.

3. A third solemn Circumstance of this Judgment consists in the Majesty of the Judge. When our Blessed Saviour came to suffer for the Sins of the World he suited his Condition accordingly, and took upon him the *Form of a Servant*. His Condescension stoop'd to the lowest Humiliation; he was then contented to bear all the Hardships of Poverty, the Scorns of Contempt, all the Insolency and Outrage of Cruelty, of Power and Malice. But at the End of the World, when he appears to execute Judgment upon all for *their ungodly Deeds which they have committed, and for their hard Speeches which they have spoken against him*, when he comes to revenge all the Injuries done to himself and his Servants, he will then assume his own proper Greatness, and make his Appearance suitable to the Dignity of his Office. Himself has foretold how illustrious his second Descent will be, when he comes
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in the *Glory of his Father*, and with all *his holy Angels*; then he will *deck himself with Light as with a Garment*, and *be cloathed with Majesty and Honour*; then he will bring the Splendor of his own Court along with him, and appear in all the Pomp and Magnificence of Heaven; the Archangels, and Principalities, and Thrones; those exalted Spirits whose Condition fully answers these Titles of Greatness, of Authority, and Power: These exalted Spirits shall be rang'd in their Hierarchal Order, appear in their Robes of State, and display the Lustre and Advantages of their Nature. Thus the *King of Glory* will be *then* attended, and though he would have none at his Crucifixion, yet now he will have more than *twelve Legions of Angels*: And as *Daniel* describes it, *Thousands of thousands shall minister unto him*, and *ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*. At that Day his sovereign Perfections will shine out, his Omnipotence become visible, and all his Actions and

Rev. xx.
ii.

Appearance be suitable to the Grandeur of a God; his Majesty will be so insupportably great, that as St. *John's* Vision represents it, Nature will sink under his Presence, and be as it were extinguish'd with the *Brightness of his Coming*. *I saw*, says he, *a great white Throne, and him that sate on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was no Place found for them*. And now, as the Prophet speaks, *Who may abide the Day of his Coming, and stand at his Appearing?* If a Messenger from the invisible State is so surprizing to us now, what a terrible Spectacle must it be when the Curtain between both Worlds is drawn, and all the Inhabitants of Heaven, and possibly of Hell too, present themselves before us? If *Daniel*, one so remarkable for his Courage, for his Innocence and Virtue, could not stand the Presence of one single Angel, but was perfectly stupefy'd and overwhelm'd with the illustrious Vision, how shall we bear the united Glories of them all? How shall

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we support the Converse of the Deity, itself? For though our Saviour will still continue what he was upon Earth, and not cease to be Man, as *Eutiches* suppos'd, yet his Divine Essence will be so visibly prevalent and conspicuous, he will be so much the *express Image of his Father's Person*, that his humane Nature will seem as it were absorb'd in the Radiancy of the Godhead: There must of Necessity therefore be a Change wrought in his Creatures to enable them to stand before him; their Senses must be fortify'd and refin'd, their Bodies must be harden'd into a firm and immortal Texture, otherwise his very Presence would destroy them, and they would scarce have Life enough to receive their Sentence, or feel their Punishment.

4. The dismal Change which will be made in the World is another heightening Circumstance of the Terror of this Judgment.

All the remarkable Instances of God's Wrath which we find in Scripture are suppos'd to be Types of this last Day

of Vengeance; such as the drowning of the old World, the burning of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, the dreadful Destruction of *Jerusalem*: 'Tis represented by the *Heavens being rolled together as a Scroll*, and the *Stars dropping out of them*, by the *Sun's being turn'd into Darknes*, and the *Moon into Blood*, by the Wailing and Lamentation of all the *Kindreds of the Earth*. In a Word, *every Thing whatever* which is apt to raise the fullest and most astonishing Ideas of Horror and Desolation; whatever is most terrible and amazing to Mortals is put into the Description; though we have Reason to believe it will fall much short of the Reality of the Thing: For how dreadful must the Appearance of Things be, when God comes to shake terribly the *Earth*, when he comes in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on those who obey not his Gospel; when he resigns his Omnipotence to his Wrath, and commands his whole Displeasure to arise! Then the Harmony of Nature will cease; the due Balance and Proportion of disagreeing

agreeing Qualities will be destroy'd, the *Foundations of the Earth will then*, in a literal Sense, be put out of Course, and all Things will seem to unravel into their first Chaos, and roll in tempestuous Confusion; for one Part of the Creation will be arm'd against another, and all at last be over-born by the raging Element of Fire: The scatter'd Seeds of Sulphur will unite into a Body, and all the Principles of Ruin and Combustion combine together. For *the Heavens*,^{2 Pet. iii.} that is the Air, *is reserved unto Fire*;^{7.} that is, 'twill lose its cooling Nature, and kindle into Flame. Then all those Stores of Vengeance which were lodg'd in the Heart of the Earth shall be opened; those Springs of Fire, which have fed *Ætna* and *Vesuvius* for so many Ages, shall exhaust their whole Strength at once, and rend whole Countries in Pieces at their Eruption *. The most

* Since the writing this Discourse, I find somewhat of a resembling kind observ'd by Dr. Tho. Burnet in his Theory of the Earth.

astonishing Thing in this World seems to be the battering and storming of a Town, where there is nothing to be heard but Mortar and Cannon, and the Shrieks of the vanquish'd, which are no less dreadful; when the Streets are cracking in the Flames, and strew'd with the Carcasses of the Slain; where all Places are fill'd with Smoak and Blood, with Despair and Defolation. But alas! this is but a faint Image, a very imperfect Resemblance of that Devastation, Misery and Terror, which will accompany the final Period of all Things; when the last and fatal Assault shall be made upon the Globe at once, when all the Works of Nature and Art will perish together, without so much as the Marks of Ruin remaining; when the whole Frame of Things shall be torn and disjointed with Tempest, and Thunder, and Earthquakes; when Islands and Continents shall be dash'd against each other, and Sea and Land thrown out of all Distinction, and shuffled into a wild and unknown Mass of Disorder; when Mountains

rains shall be shot off their Basis, when all combustible Mines will fly on Fire, and all the Metals be melted into burning Rivers: In short, when the Earth may be turn'd into a Hell, and nothing left of all its admirable and entertaining Variety, but a dismal Prospect of Smoke and Flame.

And as for the Perplexity and Confusion which will be in the Minds of Mortals, those will be infinitely far greater than the most astonishing Misery in this Life can produce. Here the Passions of the Soul sleep in a great Measure; they are in Comparison but heavy and languid, for want of Objects strong enough to call them up; our Joys and Sorrows, our Hopes and Fears in this World are upon the Matter but weak and unaffecting, so that we have no Occasion to try all our Strength upon them: But Heaven and Hell, when they once come in View, when they are presented to our Senses, are such mighty moving Things, as will be sure to awaken the Powers of the most lethargick

thargick Mind, and raise all the Force and Passions of Nature to the utmost Degree: For when Men can shelter themselves no longer in Infidelity, but are forc'd to believe they are lost for ever; when they are powerfully convinc'd, that Fire, and Fiends, and Eternity are the dismal Ingredients of their Punishment; when Damnation stands before them, and the intolerable Sentence is ready to be executed, what inexpressible Agonies will they then fall into? What Amazement and Excesses of Horror must seize upon them? Nothing but the Punishment it self can be more astonishing than the Dread of it at so near a Distance.

I should now proceed to the remaining Parts of the Text, but those are too long to be insisted on now; however, before I conclude I shall just observe, That if Men did seriously consider this *Terror of the Lord*; if they did frequently reflect, that we must all meet at this solemn Appearance, and be Spectators of the Ruin and Burning of the
the

the World, that an irreversible Sentence will pass upon us, and our Fate be fix'd for ever, according to the Quality of our Actions: Was this Consideration allow'd its just weight, Men would not be so much govern'd by Interest and worldly Maxims as they are. The Charms of Pleasure, of Wealth, and Ambition would mightily fade, and lose all the Grace and Force of their Temptation: Then we should possibly have less of the Noise, but more of the Life and Spirit of Religion in us; and the Form of Godliness would not be so wretchedly over-proportion'd to the Power of it. Nothing can be more proper than St. Peter's Advice in this Case, with ² Pet. iii. 10, 11. which I shall conclude; where after he had foretold this great Revolution, *in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also, and the Works which are therein shall be burned up*: Upon this he infers, *Seeing that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought*

ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness; looking for the Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both now and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



FROM these Words I took Occasion to propose the Consideration of these following Particulars.

I. The Certainty of a Judgment to come.

II. The

- II. The Solemnity and Terror of it.
- III. The Impartiality of the Sentence.
- IV. The Reason of the Appointment.

I. The Certainty of a Judgment to come,

I prov'd from the general Consent of Mankind, there being no Part of natural Religion, except the Being of a God, more unquestionably receiv'd by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, than the Expectation of an Account to be pass'd in the other World. This Truth I observ'd might be farther collected from the Remorse and Applauses of Conscience, Men's Thoughts either accusing or excusing them, according as they had kept or neglected the Law written in their Hearts: Their Satisfaction or Disquiet, their Hopes and Fears, their Resolution or Despondency arising from the Account they were able to give of themselves; All their Passions and Expectations usually changing their Nature and Degrees according to the private Sentence pass'd within; and as they find themselves conscious of
Guilt,

Guilt, or remarkable for Integrity. And to make this Truth more undeniable, I prov'd it from exprefs Testimonies of Scripture, from the Declarations of that God who made Man, and best knows how he will dispose of his own Creatures.

II. The second Thing to be consider'd is the Terror and Solemnity of this Judgment, which I endeavour'd to describe from these following Circumstances.

I. From the Suddenness of it. The Scripture tells us, this Day *will come like a Thief in the Night*. There will be no extraordinary Signs, at least at any Distance, to usher in this mighty Change. There will be no Warning given by Prodigies, or unusual Appearances, to make Men prepare against the approaching Evil, or to make the Terror of it more familiar to them: But when Nature is regular in her Operations, and seems firm and flourishing, 'twill be shaken, and as it were Thunder-struck all on the sudden, and sink into immediate and unexpected Ruin.

Ruin. Now all Evils are the greater for being unexpected; for by surprising us unfortify'd they are more terrible to the Imagination, and reproach the Folly of our Conduct for not being provided against them.

2. Another solemn Circumstance of this Judgment, is the Vastness and Universality of the Appearance, *We must all appear.*

3. The Majesty of the Judge will be a great Addition to this Solemnity: For then our Saviour will assume the visible State of a God; he will appear to *be the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person.*

4. The dismal Alteration which will then be made in the World, is another terrible Circumstance of this Judgment, *when the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also and all that is therein shall be burnt up.*

2 Pet. iii.
10.

Thus far I proceeded. I shall now go on to the remaining Propositions.

III. The

III. The Justice of the Sentence, and

IV. Lastly, The Reason of the Appointment.

III. The Justice of the Sentence.

Every one *will receive according to* ^{2 Cor. v.} *what he has done, whether it be good or* ^{10.} *bad.*

There are three Things which hinder Justice from taking place, 1. When the Judge is misinform'd concerning the Fact. 2. When he is byass'd by Partiality or Prejudice. 3. When he wants Power to put his Sentence in Execution. So on the contrary, when the State of the Cause, and the Measure of Right and Wrong are exactly understood, where the Judge is above the Influence of Favour or Disaffection, and has Force enough to maintain the Award given, there it's impossible for Justice to fail. That these Qualifications are in our Saviour in an eminent manner, will appear from the Consideration of his Divine Attributes, that he is God as well as Man.

Our Saviour is thoroughly acquainted with the Circumstances of those he is to

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judge,

judge. He who made all Things, and *by whom all Things consist*, needs not that any should testify of Man; he is about our Path, and about our Bed, and spies out all our Ways, and understands our Thoughts afar off; he sees us in our closest Retirements, for all Things are naked and open to him with whom we have to do; he will try our Hearts, and search out our Spirits. So that if there be any Wickedness in us, it's impossible to escape his Knowledge.

In this World the Practice of Virtue and Vice is apt to be mistaken; false Characters are impos'd upon the Multitude, and the Picture of a Man's Life is often drawn in a quite different Complexion from the Original. How often is Innocence and Integrity misrepresented either by Ignorance or Malice? How barbarously does Rashness and Ill-will misconstrue Things? How is the most unblameable Conduct, how are the most generous and extraordinary Performances blacken'd by Bigotry and Spleen? This

made the Pharisees reproach our Saviour himself with the odious Names of *Glutton* and *Wine-bibber*; and attribute his unquestionable Miracles to the Power of the Devil. So on the contrary, Things which look but very untowardly at the Bottom, are varnish'd over with a specious Outside. Thus Flattery is sometimes interpreted Friendship and Good-nature, Pride passeth for Magnanimity, Ambition for Zeal; and Interest is grac'd with the Name of Religion, Hypocrisy has Variety of Appearances to shroud itself under; and it's sometimes very difficult to understand the true Qualities of an Action, and to penetrate the Depth, and explain the Mystery of Men's Designs. But at the last Day, the Secrets of Mens Hearts will *be revealed*, and every one will appear in his proper Colours. And as Virtue will no longer lye under the Disadvantage of Censure and Reproach, as all unjust Aspersions will be wip'd off, and *the Righteous will shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*, so the Mask of Hypocrisy will be pluck'd off,

and Vice appear in its native Deformity. All pious Frauds and religious Villanies will then be laid open to Light and Punishment, and Satan be no longer suffer'd to wear the Habit of an *Angel of Light*. Such an exact Scrutiny the Omniscience of the Judge will enable him to pass: Indeed, nothing less than an Attribute of that Extent is sufficient to take a full Cognisance of all the Actions of the Sons of Men. He that would judge the World in Righteousness, and reward every one according to *their Works*, must have an all-comprehensive Mind, able to take a Prospect of universal Nature at once, and keep an exact Account of all Things relating to human Affairs. To state the Actions of Men rightly, all their Powers and Purposes, their Tempers and Habits must be exactly known. The Nature, and especially the Degrees of Virtue and Vice depends upon abundance of nice Circumstances. To determine how far a Man is good or bad, it's necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with his whole Nature, the Constitution
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of his Body, and Qualities of his Mind must be examin'd ; the Force of Education, the Reluctance, the Indifferency or Inclination of the Will, and the Frequency of Action must be enquir'd into : If the Action be bad, the Circumstances of Surprise or Deliberation, of Fear or Presumption, of Necessity or Ill-nature, must be critically adjusted : If it be good, the Value of it can never be understood 'till the Principles of it are thoroughly scann'd, whether Religion, Generosity and Good-nature, or else Interest, bodily Temper or Vanity, were the *chief* Motives to it. Thus we see what a large and comprehensive Knowledge of Persons, Times, and Things, and what an infallible Judgment is requisite to pronounce Sentence upon the World, and determine the everlasting Condition of all Men according to the Laws of Justice : So that as far as we can conceive, no Understanding short of God Almighty's, is sufficient to discharge so great an Office. But,

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2. As the Judge of the World is omniscient, so he is impartial; he will not condemn the innocent, nor clear the guilty out of any partial Regard; but every one will receive his Doom according to the Merit of the Cause. Men have contracted many Imperfections upon themselves, which make them prove unequal Judges, for want of holding the Balance even. The Excesses of Self-Love, to which they are naturally prone, make them value others who resemble their Persons, Temper or Condition, whether they are good or bad: They are often unreasonably kind to their own Children, to their own Notions and Conceptions of Things, and sometimes to their own Follies and Deformities. It is a hard Matter to make them see any Faults in the Party which they follow; or any Virtue in that which they oppose. The Reasons which make their Judgments unindifferent, and pervert Justice, are too many to be reckon'd up; sometimes Fondness over-rules them, and sometimes they are sour'd into unreasonable Severity

rity by Hatred and Aversion; sometimes they will overlook a Crime, in Hopes of gaining by their Connivance; and sometimes they dare not pronounce in Behalf of Justice, for Fear of disobliging a greater Power. A rough and imperious Person is apt to strain Justice into Rigour on the one Hand, and a soft and affable Disposition is in Danger of loosening it into Indulgence and Insignificancy on the other. Some are brib'd into Partiality with Money, and some by Rhetorick; and Right and Reason is run down by Flourish and Harmony, by Sounds and Cadences. In short, Love and Hatred, Hope and Fear, Humour, Interest or Elocution, whatever can command the Passions, and make a Ferment or Commotion within, have often an unhappy Effect upon the Judgment or Conscience; and either make a Man think, or do that which he ought not. But God is liable to none of these Defects, he is the Fountain and the Rule of Righteousness; and therefore always proportions his Esteem of Things according to their

their real Worth : He can no more be partial, or over-rigorous in his Censures, than he can deny himself. And as his Nature and Inclinations stand for Justice, so he has no Motives to persuade him to the contrary ; he is above the Passions of Hope and Desire, which always arise from Want and Weakness. We can give him nothing which he has not, nor take away any Thing that he has. His Self-Sufficiency makes him compleatly, independently, and eternally happy, and therefore can't have the least Inducement from Fear or Advantage to vary from Equity. His Omnipotency secures him from all Apprehensions of having his Judgment revers'd, or being call'd to an Account for his Proceedings ; and therefore he needs not comply with any foreign Inclination, nor follow any one's Reason but his own. And as for his Goodness, there is no Ground for Presumption to rely upon that ; for though he is *loving to every Man, and his Mercy is above all his Works*, yet he will never stretch this Attribute to the Prejudice

dice of his Justice; he will not break his own Laws to make those happy who would not contribute any thing towards it themselves, who have defy'd his Power, rejected his Grace, and abus'd his Blessings. Since they have *despis'd his Counsel*, and would have *none of his Reproof*; since they have neglected all the Means of Salvation; since neither his Ministers, nor his Spirit, his Promises, nor Threatenings, his Mercies, nor his Judgments, could work upon them; *he will mock at their Calamity, and laugh when their Fear cometh*; that is, he will be inexorable and deaf to all their Importunities and Prayers; their Miseries will not make him relent, nor recall the Resolutions of his Vengeance: For God is no fond Being, he is not to be mov'd by unaccountable Pity, but is always determin'd by Reasons and Things; and therefore whatever a Man sows he must also expect to reap. And as the Determinations of Omniscience and Impartiality must necessarily be just; so in the third Place,

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3. Where there is Omnipotence to enforce them, they can't fail of having their Effect. Now this irresistible Attribute belongs to our Saviour, by virtue of his Divine Nature. Power is a noble and majestick Attribute, and gives Life and Perfection to all great Designs; wise Contrivances and virtuous Dispositions, without correspondent Force to back them, signify nothing. Wisdom and Goodness unfortify'd by Power, are but vain Speculations and charitable Dreams. A kind Wish relieves no Man, for it's one Thing to think, and another to effect; without Power we can neither oblige our selves nor others, neither prevent a foreseen Evil, nor pursue an Advantage. The most virtuous Mind, if it has no Strength but that of Zeal and Inclination, can never keep the World in Order; it can't relieve the Oppressed, nor punish the wrong Doer; neither reward the Good, nor chastise the Evil. Why does Wickedness so often prevail, and sit at the upper end of the World, but because the Malefactor is too strong for the Law,
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and the Sword of Justice is not sharp enough for Execution ?

This is the Reason, as the Prophet speaks, that *Truth is fallen in the Streets, and Equity cannot enter*. This makes the Sons of Violence trust in *Wrong and Robbery*, and push their Pride and Malice to the utmost Extremity ; they commit a second Outrage to secure the first, and make one Sin defend and fortify another. Thus when Right and Power are divided, (as it often happens in this World) Wickedness defies Justice, and grows invincible by Rapine and Oppression : But when God comes to judge the Earth, he will shew his *out-stretched Arm*, and bring the Marks of his Omnipotence along with him : When *he whets his glittering Sword, and his Hand takes hold of Judgment, he will render Vengeance to all his Enemies, and reward those that hate him*. When (as *Elihu* speaks) *he thunders with the Voice of his Excellency*, and makes his Greatness as visible as any other Attribute, then the most impregnable Sinner must yield, and

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and the *Wicked will be trodden down in their Place*: Then that of the Prophet will be most remarkably verify'd; *The lofty Looks of Man will be humbled, and the Haughtiness of Men shall be brought down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day*. Then those who have been a Terror to their Neighbours, and shewn their Power chiefly in doing Mischief; who have rais'd their Figure out of the publick Calamity, and like the Plague, grown remarkable by Wasting and Desolation; these Monsters of Pride and Injustice, who have made their Will a Law, and worshipp'd no Deity but themselves, *the Lord shall then consume with the Spirit of his Mouth, and destroy with the Brightness of his Coming*. They will be stripp'd of their Grandeur, their Guards, and their Retinue, and stand trembling and defenceless before him *that sits upon the Throne, and before the Wrath of the Lamb*: Their Punishment will then be proportion'd to the Abuse of their Power; and *mighty Men shall be mightily torment-
ed.*

ed. And as our Saviour has all the Requisites of Knowledge, Impartiality, and Power, to make him an awful Judge to the Wicked; so there is *Mercy with him that he may be feared*, but not to Desperation, by those who endeavour to serve him. His Justice will be temper'd with Goodness and Compassion towards those who have given him a sincere, though not a perfect Obedience: He will not proceed to the Extremity of Rigour, nor condemn us for not performing up to the highest Possibilities of our Strength. There will be Allowances made for Ignorance and Surprize, for the Infirmities of our Nature, and the Disadvantages of our Condition: We shall not be judg'd by the Law of Angels, as if we had nothing but Soul and Spirit about us; but Abatements will be granted for the Frailty and Unweildiness of Flesh and Blood: *He knows whereof we are made, and remembers that we are but Dust*; that our rational Powers are apt to be disturbed by the Impressions of Sense; that *the corruptible Body presses*
6 *down*

down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weighs down the Mind that muses upon many Things ; and therefore as a Father pities his own Children, so will the Lord be merciful to those that fear him. Those whose Intentions have been honest and religious, and whose Life has been virtuous as to the main ; such Persons will have their smaller Errors overlook'd, and through the Satisfaction of *Christ*, their Repentance will be accepted instead of their Innocence in the rest.

I proceed now to the last Thing observable in this Judgment, and that is,

IV. The Reason of the Appointment ; which is,

1. For the Manifestation of God's Justice.

2. That good and bad Men may be for ever distinguished by suitable Rewards and Punishments.

1. For the Manifestation of God's Justice.

Though God is too great a Being to stand in need of the Suffrage and Consent of his Creatures : Though his Absoluteness

soluteness and Independency is such that his Happiness is neither capable of Increase by our Praises and Approbation, nor of being lessened by our Murmuring and Disgust: Though his own Choice is a sufficient Authority and Satisfaction to himself, yet in his Proceedings with Men, his Condescension is such, that he is pleased to appeal to our Reason, and make our own Consciences the Judge. And thus every Sinner will see himself inexcusable before God; shall *confess that the Judge of all the World has done right, that his Ways are equal, and ours unequal.* He will not over-rule our Plea by his irresistible Sovereignty, nor resolve our Fate into any absolute and irrespective Decrees: None will fall a Sacrifice to his Omnipotence, nor be condemned because his Strength is less than his Maker's. When God, as the Prophet *Micah* speaks, *has this great Controversy with his People*, and pleads with the whole World, the Equity of his Sentence will be apparent, and his Reason be victorious as well as his Power. At that Day all
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the Intricacies and seeming Inequalities of Providence will be unfolded : All remarkable Instances of the Divine Patience, or Severity, will be explained ; all those mysterious Cases will then be cleared, which have sometimes perplexed the Understandings of thoughtful Men, and made others, in a fit of Spleen and Impatience, conclude that the World was govern'd by Chance, and that God did not concern himself with Things below. But then all these Doubts and Difficulties will be resolved ; then it will appear that the Lord *is not slack, as some Men count slackness* ; that he neither disdained nor neglected the Administration of human Affairs ; but that there is a *God that judges the Earth*, that his Eyes behold the Children of Men, that he tries their *Hearts and searches out their Reins* ; that all the Circumstances of their Nature, Actions and Conditions, are remarked : Their Temper and Capacity, the Opportunities and Temptations they have had to Vice, their Encouragements, Admonitions, and Assistances to Virtue ; all the Good and Evil they have

have done, together with the Degrees and Aggravations of it; all these things, as the Psalmist expresses it, *are noted in his Book*, in order to a Sentence; in which the Wisdom of his Government will be display'd, his Justice vindicated, and the most plausible Objections of those who question'd his Providence, will be for ever silenced and confuted. The *Scepticks* may possibly think now, as they formerly did, that God is regardless of the Quality of our Actions; that our Practice of Virtue or Vice, are indifferent to him; that it's below his Greatness to concern himself about our Behaviour; that he is not to be moved with the Passions of Love or Hatred, nor ever shews any Marks of Favour or Compassion, of Anger or Revenge; but the Awards of this Tribunal will fully convince them of their Error, that *the righteous Lord loves Righteousness, and that he rewardeth every one according to his Works*. Which brings me to the second Reason of this Appointment, *viz.*

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2. That

2. That good and bad Men may be for ever distinguish'd by suitable Rewards and Punishments.

In this World there is a great deal of Darkneſs and Perplexity upon the Face of Things, and Virtue and Vice are utterly uninterpretable by Succeſs. The Fate of the Righteous and the Wicked is ſhuffled in common and promiſcuous Events, as if the Diſtinctions of Good and Evil were nothing but empty Names, and Terms of Philoſophy : Nay, ſometimes a Man fares the worſe for his Integrity, and thoſe who are *righteous make themſelves a Prey* ; their Virtue is diſcountenanc'd and oppreſs'd ; they are perſecuted in their Fortune and in their Fame ; they are often purſued with a Succeſſion of croſs Accidents, and ſtruggle with the moſt unacceptable Difficulties and Miſfortunes of Life. St. *Paul* tells us how roughly the moſt illuſtrious Saints have been uſed ; thoſe of *whom the World was not worthy*. They were expoſ'd to Penury and Contempt, to the Violence of cruel Men : *They wandred about*
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in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, in Dens and Caves of the Earth; they were destitute, afflicted, tormented. So on the other side, it has been both observ'd and lamented, how strangely Wickedness and Injustice has prosper'd; what fair Returns of Advantage have been brought in by Fraud and Circumvention; and how often Rapine and Oppression has made its Way to Greatness and Power. What is more common than to see those who have the least *Godliness* carry off the greatest *Gains*, thrive upon their Vices, and have their Success encreased proportionably to their Guilt? They rise from contemptible Beginnings, and gain their Point without those Checks and Difficulties which attend industrious Honesty: Nature seems to wait upon them, and the happy Event of Things surmounts not only their Expectations, but their Wishes too. And for a Consummation of all, the Progress of their good Fortune is sometimes smooth and uninterrupted, drawn out to a surprising Length, and they enjoy, with as much Security as

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they acquir'd with Injustice. They flourish in their Families, and in their Friends, and grow old in Vice and Prosperity. So that what *Solomon* observes of Wisdom, is sometimes no less true of that which he calls Folly ; *In her Right-Hand is Length of Days, and in her Left-Hand Riches and Honour.* Let us hear her glorious Votaries describ'd by

Psa. lxxiii.
5, 7.

Job and the Psalmist. They come in no Misfortune like other Folk, nor are plagued like other Men ; their Eyes swell with Fatness, and they do even what

Job xxi.
7, &c.

they lust. They live, (though he wondered at it) become old, and are mighty in Power ; their Seed is established in their Sight with them, and their Offspring before their Eyes. Their Houses are safe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them ; they take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoice at the sound of the Organ : They spend their Days in Wealth, and in a Moment (without any remarkable Judgment) go down to the Grave.

And now, if there was nothing after this Life, the Psalmist's hasty Complaint would be unanswerable, and good Men might often apply to themselves, without retracting it, *That they had cleansed their Hearts in vain, and washed their Hands in Innocency.* But though Providence sometimes suffers Virtue and Vice to be unsuitably treated here, and there may be very good Reasons given for such a Permission, yet at the last Account all these Things will be rectify'd, and every one's Condition adjusted to the Merit of his Cause. Though God may connive at the Wicked for a while, either for their Repentance, or more exemplary Punishment; though he may try the Faith and Constancy of his Servants for their greater Advantage, yet the Marks of the Divine Favour or Displeasure will not be always thus mystical and concealed; for when the *Book of Remembrance* the Prophet mentions is called over, then there will be a visible and everlasting Distinction made, and we shall plainly *discern between*

him that served God, and him that served him not: For can we imagine that God will for ever discountenance his own Orders, and make his Laws a Grievance to those who keep them? Will he take no Notice of those who have deny'd their strongest Passions, and renounc'd their fairest Interest in Obedience to his Commands; vindicated his Honour, and supported his Government at the highest Expence? Will the Name of Virtue and Vice be indistinguishably bury'd in the Grave, and *carried into the Land where all Things are forgotten?* No! it's not the Property of a wise Governour to be unconcerned about the Observance or Neglect of those Things which himself has prescrib'd: This were to reflect upon the Wisdom of the Constitution, and to make him the Author of such Provisions which were vain and insignificant. In due Time God *will arise and maintain his own Cause,* reward his Servants, and punish his Enemies. At that solemn Appearance none shall repent of the Good, nor boast of
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the Evil they have done; none shall condemn his Power any longer, nor wait upon his Promises in vain. The whole Extent of his Providence will be fully vindicated; and what has been delay'd in this Life will be paid to the *utmost Farthing*: For then (as the Prophet speaks) *Judgment shall run down like Waters, and Righteousness like a mighty Stream*. Then those who chose to be great rather than good, who prefer'd the Pomp and Vanity of this World to their baptismal Vows; who valu'd the Noise of popular Applause more than the silent Whispers of a good Conscience; then they will see the Folly of their Choice too late, be defeated in all their Schemes of Ambition, and be mean and miserable for ever. The Unmerciful shall be excluded Mercy, the Intemperate punish'd in those Senses he has abus'd; and the Impostor have his Portion with those Spirits who *lye in wait to deceive*. Then shall the Righteous shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and be fix'd in the Fir-

mament of Honour ; all Sorrow shall be banish'd from their Breasts, all Tears from their Eyes, and all Aspersions from their Name ; their Labours and their Fears will end, their Faith have no farther Tryal, and their Hopes expire in the Fruition of those inconceivable Pleasures which are at *God's Right Hand*. This Day of Deliverance will free them from all disagreeable Society ; they will be no longer forced to *dwell with Mezech*, with Peevishness and Pride, with Madness and Folly : Their *righteous Soul will be vexed no more with the Conversation of the Wicked*. And as the Apostle speaks in another Sense, *They will converse no longer with Flesh and Blood, with Weakness, Ignorance and Passion, but be translated to the Spirits of just Men made perfect* ; to the Wise, the Obliging, and the Brave ; and be noble Instances themselves of those Virtues they admire in others. Thus and much more will be done to those whom the King of Glory *delights to honour*. Indeed, if the Scriptures were silent in the Case, if God had
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not solemnly declar'd his Intentions of rewarding Virtue and punishing Vice, we might certainly conclude it from the Consideration of his Attributes: For waving the Reason of the Thing, and how agreeable such a Distribution is to the Holiness and Rectitude of God's Nature: Waving this, I say, almost all intelligent Beings, especially those which are generous and kind, are naturally prone to esteem those who are like themselves. And if they are furnish'd with Ability, they never fail to demonstrate their Affection in the most sensible and obliging Instances; for Conformity of Humour and Disposition is observed to be one of the most endearing Motives to Friendship and Love. God therefore, we may sure, will never neglect those who resemble himself, who are the Images of his blessed Nature, and the Offspring not only of his Power, but of his Will. His Inclinations will oblige him to cherish and reward those who are pricked on with a noble and generous Ambition, to rise up to his Perfections as far as their Condition will give them

them Leave; who strive to imitate his Purity, his Mercy and Goodness, and adorn their Minds with the most amiable Part of his Character: *The righteous Lord loves Righteousness, his Countenance will behold the Thing that is just.* Those who have been eminent for their Patience and Charity, for their firm and immoveable Integrity, will be receiv'd with the highest Marks of Approbation, and distinguish'd proportionably to their Virtues in the Scale of Honour: His Attributes will be all employ'd to reward and dignify their Service; his Goodness will desire, his Wisdom contrive, and his Power effect their Happiness. So on the contrary, those who are mean and narrow-spirited, proud and spiteful, cruel and implacable, who have defaced all the noble Impressions of Goodness they were created with: These, as the Psalmist observes, *shall not be able to stand in the Judgment, nor Sinners in the Congregation of the Righteous.* The Contrariety of their Tempers must make every holy and virtuous Mind have an
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Aversion to them: So that like hated Objects, they will be banish'd from the Presence of God and Bliss, and be consigned over to those Apostate and malicious Spirits, whose Nature they resemble.

From what has been said, I shall briefly infer these following Things.

I. We ought to manage with great Integrity, since there will come a Day in which the Secrets of all Mens Hearts will be revealed, and that which is *spoken in Closets will be proclaimed upon the House-Tops*; when the Paint of Hypocrisy will be pull'd off, and every thing appear in its proper Shape and Quality. This Consideration ought to make us carefull not to do any thing which is not strictly conscientious, which will not stand Examination, and bear the Light. We ought to *commune with our Hearts*, and take an exact Review of our Actions, lest there should be some undiscover'd Blemishes in us; some *accursed Thing hidden*, which either Business, Partiality or Pleasure has made us overlook.

look. 'Tis to no Purpose to wrap our selves in Disguise, in Reserve and Ambiguity; though here Fraud and Artifice sometimes succeeds luckily enough among Men, and goes farther than plain dealing: But God is *not mocked*. Such counterfeit Practices will never pass the last great Enquiry, nor stand the *fiery Tryal*. Dishonesty even in this World, tho' it has a great many Friends to keep it in Countenance, yet it makes but an odd Figure when it's discover'd; 'tis always counted a Sign of Meanness, if not of Malice; and those who gain most by it have seldom the Hardiness to defend it. How foul therefore must all Knavery, and Prevarication appear at that dreadful Bar, where the righteous God gives Sentence, where the *Saints judge the Earth*, where Wickedness will have no Pretences to shroud, to palliate, or excuse it, but be expos'd in its own native Deformity, with all the just Aggravations of Meanness, of Folly and Ingratitude about it? Such a solemn Discovery before such Judges must fill the Sinner's Breast with
Anguish

Anguish and Confusion, and render *Sin exceeding sinful*; so that the Shame of such a Censure will be little less unsupportable than the Punishment. Let us therefore act with that Sincerity, that godly Simplicity, which becomes those who expect to undergo so strict a Scrutiny. Let us take no *wicked Thing in Hand, but walk with a perfect Heart; let us renounce the hidden Things of Dishonesty, and endeavour to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Man.* But,

Secondly and Lastly, The Consideration of such a Judgment should teach us to have a low Esteem of all worldly Advantages. The good Things of this Life, were they never so free from Care and Temptation, were they never so innocent and diverting, yet the short Continuance of them ought to abate our Affections, and call us off from too eager a Pursuit. Why should we set our Heart upon Things which are so fugitive and transient in their Natures; and which will in a few Years at farthest go off and vanish,

nish, and take their leaves for ever ? Indeed, if these Enjoyments would return after some Intermissions in the Grave ; if they would revive after the general Dissolution, and spring out of the Ashes of the World, then they might not be altogether undeserving our Thoughts, and it might be worth our while to keep up our Appetites 'till their next meeting : But since, after *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, a quite different Scene will be open'd ; since Nature will be cast in another Mould, and our Powers and Apprehensions will be very different from what they are now ; since neither the Laws and Customs, the Business and Entertainment of the upper Region are the same with those which are here admir'd, it's certainly our wisest Way to disengage betimes from such a perishable Interest, and which we must shortly resign whether we will or no, and prepare our selves for that State and Society where we hope to abide for ever. Who that seriously considers what a terrible Alteration there will be made upon
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the Face of Things, and what an inconceivable Share either of Good or Ill he will have in it himself, would over-grasp his Conscience about the getting, or dote upon the Enjoyment of this World? The Pleasures of the other Life are much greater in their Quality than those of this; but if they were only equal in this Respect, their Eternity ought to give them a vast Preference, and make them infinitely more desirable. The Duration of an Advantage is a very valuable Circumstance; for tho' it does not affect the Degrees, yet it continues the State of the Pleasure, and keeps it up in Life and Being. Let us therefore take Care not to over-rate this Life, nor give the World any more Respect than is due. Since we have no *continuing City* here, let us seek *one above*; since we were placed here only for a Tryal of our Temper and Liberty, and are shortly to be transplanted into the Regions of Eternity, let us take Care that our Life be agreeable to our Belief; that our Integrity and Circumspection, our Sobriety and Contempt of the World, our Patience and

Christian Fortitude, bear a suitable Proportion to the Persuasions of those who expect to stand before God's Tribunal ; that so we may *give up our Account with Joy, and not with Grief.*

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.



SERMON



SERMON III.

2 COR. viii. 9.

*For ye know the Grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, that though he was
rich, yet for your sakes he became
poor, that ye through his Poverty
might be rich.*



THE Distance between God and
Man is such, that our blef-
fed Saviour might have been
said to have impoverish'd him-
self at his Incarnation, though he had
assumed our Nature with all the Circum-
stances of Advantage. Had his Conditi-

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on been honourable and wealthy, and never so well fortify'd and supply'd; had he had all the innocent **Satisfactions** that **Power** and **Contrivance** could furnish, yet in this **Region of Mortality** we are encumber'd with so many unavoidable **Difficulties**, and carry such **Marks of Weakness** and **Dependance** about us, that as *David* observes, Man at his best Estate is little less than *altogether Vanity*. We need take but a short Survey of the several Stages of Life to demonstrate this Truth. Now, how tender and imperfect are the Rudiments of our Being, how defenceless do we come into the World, and what a small stock of Strength and Understanding do we set out with? How many Dangers are we subject to in our Childhood; how contemptible are our Entertainments, and what a slavish and arbitrary Government are we subject to? And though our want of Apprehension makes some of these Inconveniences less troublesome to us now, yet if we had a double and distinct Capacity, if we carry'd the Man and the Child about us at the same

Time;

Time ; if we had one Soul, little more than a Blank, without any Characters of Knowledge in it, and another, grown to its full Maturity in Judgment and Experience, the Case would be very different ; for then the Folly, the Servitude, and insecure Condition of the Infant Part would be exactly observed, which without Doubt would be no pleasant Speculation to the other : If we could criticise upon our selves in our Child-hood, if we could consider how slowly we emerge out of the State of a Brute, by what insensible Degrees Understanding dawns upon us, and what little and laborious Steps we take towards Improvement, we should think we made but an odd Figure in the World. And to carry the Hint a little farther, supposing an Angel vitally united to one of us, when our Mind and Body were in the most flourishing and best furnish'd Condition ; when he found himself oblig'd to the continual Returns of Sleep, which are no less than so many Breaks and Intervals in Life ; when he was intimately sensible how ma-

ny little Actions we do over again, and how trifling that Employment is which we call the Business of our Life: When he felt our eager Desires, our amazing Fears, and all that Train of Passions which follow from the Shortness and Obscurity of our Reason, from our Want of Power, and from all those Accidents we are daily exposed to; if such an intelligent Spirit was experimentally acquainted with these Things, we have reason to believe he would be somewhat weary of his Composition, and endeavour to disentangle himself into his former Being. From all which it appears what a great Condescension it was for the *Word to be made Flesh*; what an humble Habitation he was contented with, when he dwelt among us, and that human Nature, at its highest Exaltation here, can be but a mean Companion for a God. But our blessed Saviour was not only pleased to stoop to the Poverty of our Nature, but to the poorest Condition of that too: His first Reception in the World was mean, his Birth reputedly obscure, his Life laborious

rious and slenderly accommodated; and all this Hardship he willingly underwent, all this Abasement and Contempt his infinite Love reconciled him to, that the Design of our Salvation might be the more effectually promoted: *For though he was rich in himself, yet for our sakes he became poor.*

From the Words I shall take Occasion to offer some Reasons, why our blessed Saviour did not chuse easy and splendid Circumstances, nor appear in the Pomp of a temporal Prince.

I. Because if he had appear'd in this manner, he could not have fulfilled the Prophecies of the Old Testament. 'Tis true, the sensual Apprehension of the *Jews* made them mistake his Character, and misinterpret those Descriptions which related to him: Their ambitious Desires made them wrest those Places to his first, which were only meant of his second Coming; their fond Imaginations made them stick in the Letter, and judge only by the Sound of the sacred Oracles, without any farther Enquiry into the Scope

and Analogy of them; they concluded that worldly Greatness was secured them by those Predictions, which were only intended to intimate the Flourishing, and Dominion of Virtue and Truth. They expected his Kingdom should have been of this World, that he should have gone forth with their Armies, delivered them from the *Roman Yoke*, and made them a glorious and formidable People; they fancy'd no less than universal Monarchy, to have had the *Heathen for their Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for their Possession*. But it was determined by the Counsel of God, that the *Messiah* should come in a quite different manner; and therefore none of this Grandeur agrees with the humble Character the Scriptures have given him. There he is represented as a Root growing out of a dry Ground: He is foretold to *have no Form nor Comeliness*, so that when we should see him, there will be no *Beauty that we should desire him*. And as the Prophet goes on, he is *despised and rejected of Men; we hid as it were*
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Isa. liii.
2, &c.

our Faces from him, he was despised, and we esteemed him not: He was oppressed and afflicted, taken from Prison and from Judgment, and cut off from the Land of the Living. So Psalm xxii, where the Circumstances of his Passion are so plainly and particularly described, he is said to be a very Scorn of Men, and the Outcast of the People. All which Places are undeniable Evidences of the obscure, and despicable, and suffering State the *Messiah* was to appear in: And where he is called a King, to prevent all Expectations of his reigning in this World, 'tis added, that he was to be meek, or poor and lowly, without the usual State and Ornaments of Majesty; and when this Scripture was fulfilled at his Entrance into *Jerusalem*, there was nothing like a Regal Port, no Marks of Sovereignty, either in himself or his Retinue, as we may see in *St. Matt. xxi. 5, &c.* And since the infallible Spirit had described the *Messiah* under a private and mean Character, had distinguished him no less by his Poverty and ill Usage, than by his Miracles: When

he came, it was absolutely necessary he should submit to all these Inconveniences, for whatever God has foretold, must certainly come to pass; and therefore if our blessed Saviour had set up his Kingdom here like other Princes; if his Way of living had been great and prosperous, according to the vulgar Notions of these Things, all his other extraordinary Actions might well have been suspected, his Claim to the Office of the *Messiah* could never have been justified, because his Condition was so very different from that which the Holy Ghost had described the *Messiah* by.

II. If he had chosen a plentiful and flourishing Condition, his Doctrine, and probably his Miracles too, might in a great Measure have been attributed to the Improvements of Study, and the Advantage of Education, and so the Divine Power by which he acted would have been the less understood. Most People understand what a great Difference there is between uncultivated Nature, and the Advantages of Art; it's generally acknowledged

knowledg'd, that Industry and Meditation, and a frequent Converse with the Knowing and Judicious, is a mighty Enlargement of those Capacities Men brought into the World with them : It makes their Understanding more sharp and apprehensive, sets an Edge upon their Reason, and widens the Prospect of the Soul ; makes them see farther, and more exactly into the Properties and Connexion of natural Causes, into the Tempers and Passions of their Neighbours : It makes them more nice in distinguishing, more solid in comparing and weighing of Things ; it enriches the Imagination, raises a Sprightliness of Thought, and adds Force, and Order, and Beauty to Discourse. So that had our blessed Saviour been brought up at the Feet of the *Jewish* Rabbies, been instructed by the *Athenian* Philosophers, or *Roman* Orators, had his Education been polished and expensive, and made him like *Moses*, learned in all the Wisdom of the *Egyptians* ; if this had happen'd, the Actions of his Life would not have been so remarkable : If his Life had been all a-
long

long spent in Letters, he would not have rais'd the Wonder of the People to that Degree. They would not have been so apt to have said, *Never Man spake like this Man, and whence has he these mighty Things?* That Strength, and Uncommonness of Thought, that Clearness and Majesty which appears in his Discourses, particularly in his Sermon upon the Mount, would have been less admirable if he had come from the Schools of the Prophets. His dextrous disengaging himself from those captious Questions of the *Herodians*, his sudden resolving the profoundest Doubts, his silencing the Scribes and Pharisees, would in such a Case have been look'd on as human Acquisitions, and so been the less surprizing; they would no doubt have esteem'd him a Person of great Abilities, have taken him for some eminent Philosopher, and there probably their Thoughts would have stopp'd: For when Men are suppos'd to be well prepar'd for any Undertaking, and have had the fairest Opportunities
of

of Improvement, what Wonder is it if they do something more than ordinary; People look for no less from them, and it's often harder to reach, than to exceed their Expectation: But when extraordinary Performances come from obscure and unqualify'd Persons; this carries Surprize and Wonder along with them; this makes an unusual Impression upon Mens Minds, and awakens their Curiosity to enquire from what unknown Original, from what mysterious Assistance the mighty Effects proceed: And when they can discover no Resemblance of Nature, no Marks of humane Extraction; they then ascribe them to the great Author of all, who can work as easily without second Causes, as with them.

The Presence of a divine Power is never so clear and undisputable as when it acts alone, or by feeble Instruments. The Concurrence of humane Means serves only to intercept its Appearance, and eclipse its Lustre: Therefore, as *Origen* observes, our Saviour chose mean and unletter'd

unletter'd Persons for his Apostles, that they might not be suspected to have publish'd a Doctrine of their own Invention. Their being thus unfurnish'd and unpromising in themselves, made their Inspiration more unquestionable; their being ignorant of the Depths of Philosophy, and unpractis'd in the Arts of Speaking, made their excellent Discourses look more like the sacred Responses of an Oracle, than the Compositions of Wit and Learning. This with other Circumstances, made it apparent to their Hearers, that it was not they which spoke, but *the Holy Ghost which was in them*. And for the same Reason our blessed Saviour chose such humble Circumstances himself, that he might give the greater Evidences of his Mission, and make the Characters of Divinity more legible in his Doctrine: For Men could not imagine, that Poverty, and a low Converse, and a mean Employment could ever by the Strength of natural Capacity frame such admirable Rules of Life, give such effectual and comprehensive

hensive Directions for Happiness; nor appear with such a noble Air of Gravity and Greatness among Persons of the highest Condition.

And as the World had no Reason to imagine this, so neither could they say he talk'd for himself, or aim'd at any secular Advantage in the Instructions he gave to others: And as his Doctrine, so likewise his Actions were the more remarkable for his slender Appearance.

Had his Life been ornamented with Wealth and Authority, and employ'd in Speculations and Researches into Nature, tho' the Ambition of the *Jews* would have been pleas'd with this Character, and receiv'd him the sooner for the Honour of their Nation; yet other People it's likely might have suspected this glorious Scene: They might possibly have fancy'd, that he perform'd these extraordinary Actions by the Help of a learned Correspondence, by his Skill in natural Causes, by understanding the Laws of the Elements, the Constitution of Mens Bodies, the Progress and Waning of Diseases.

eases. And though these had been but weak Exceptions, yet the Infidelity of Men will stumble at the least Rub: And tho' the Reality of these mighty Works had not been doubted, yet they might possibly have question'd their Divine Original, and ascribed them to no creditable Assistant, fancy'd they had been wrought for private Fame and Grandeur, and to serve the Ends of Interest and Power. But the Meanness of our Saviour's Condition, his mortify'd Temper, his refusing to exert his Power for his own Ease and Advantage, take away all Colour as well as Force from these Objections: They give an illustrious Proof of a supernatural and divine Concurrence, and make his Miracles more miraculous.

III. Such a splendid Appearance of the *Messiah* as the *Jews* expected, would have given Men a new Temptation to over-value worldly Honour and Greatness, to which they are too prone already. There is no greater Argument of the Weakness and Degeneracy of Mankind,

kind, than their strong Inclinations to Covetousness and Ambition; as if there was nothing great but what makes a Shew, and glitters upon a vulgar Eye; as if they could not enjoy their own Freedom without laying their Neighbour in Chains, nor take any Delight in their Condition without making that of others uneasy.

'Tis certain, that an immoderate Desire of Wealth and Dominion have been the Occasion of most of those Wickednesses and Calamities which have so much afflicted and disorder'd the World. Hence it is that all Ages have complain'd so much of the Hypocrisy and Violence, and Oppression of the Times they liv'd in. This is that which puts Men so frequently upon Forgery and Falshood, upon circumventing and betraying each other; it makes them submit to the most ignoble Methods, and serve themselves by the most scandalous Instruments; it makes them regardless of the Ties and Endearments of Nature, of the Laws of Decency and Honour.

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All this Treachery, and Ruffling, and uncreditable Meanness tends to no other Point but to enlarge their Possessions, and raise their Titles and Posterity; to give them a great many Things and Persons which they have no real Occasion for, and to make them admir'd by Ignorance and Flattery. *Whence come Wars and Fightings*, the burning of Cities, and the Desolation of Countries? What is the Reason that, as *Tully* observes, Mankind are the most fatal Enemies to each other; that all the Famines and Earthquakes, the Plagues and Inundations, all the Accidents of Nature, and the Scourges of Heaven, have not swept away so many Lives, nor made such Ravage and Devastation as the Sword? Why, 'tis Ambition which hath occasion'd all this Ruin and Barbarity; 'tis Empire, and what they call Glory; 'tis to get the Power to enslave and destroy, to be more mighty to do Mischief, which pushes the *Nimrods* of the Earth to these Acts of Violence: And though they don't always make the worst Use of their Power,
yet

yet they love to have it, to shew their Superiority, and over-awe the World. Now, if our blessed Saviour had taken the State of a King upon him, and wrought those temporal Deliverances the *Jews* expected; this would have made Men more eager of that which St. *John* calls *the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*. The Enterprizing and Encroaching would have been glad of the Colour of so great an Example, and possibly with a little Partiality of Thought, which is seldom wanting in such Cases, they might have believ'd themselves in the Right. Come, (might such People have said) let us not be enslav'd by the awful Name of Equity any longer; these obsolete Rules of Justice which make so much a *Noise*, are nothing but overgrown and antient Mistakes, the rash Decisions of the World in its State of Infancy, or the Dictates of some pedantick Philosophers. These melancholy Recluses indeed tell us, that we must not encroach upon the Property of our Neighbours; that the Way to be hap-

py is to contract our Desires, and value ourselves upon nothing without us, upon nothing but that which they call the Improvement of our Reason, and the Regularity of our Passions. But we are well assur'd, that all this dogmatical Talk proceeds either from Ignorance, or Envy, or Despair. They would feign have the Rich throw away their Estates, and Princes part with their Crowns, either that they might take them up, or else that all Things might be brought towards a Level, and so their own Obscurity be the less remarkable.

But sure the Son of God understood the Perfection of humane Nature better than these Men: See what Royal State he appear'd in, see the Pomp and Retinue of his Court, what Victories he achiev'd, how he recover'd the Freedom, and enlarg'd the Dominions of his own Nation. And therefore let People talk what they please of his mortifying Doctrine, his Life is the best Comment upon his Laws; for it's certain he could not mistake his own Meaning, though others might

might. Let us lay aside the old flegmatick Morality, which serves only to chill and discourage a generous Mind, and to keep us low and servile, and dependant. 'Tis Godlike to be great; nay, except we partake in some Measure of his Power, it's impossible to imitate his Goodness: For what does Inclination signify without Ability to perform? What worthy Undertaking was ever perfected by the Strength of a good Intention? A kind Wish enriches no Man, for if it can go no farther, it's no better than a charitable Dream. Let it therefore be our main Business to make our Figure as considerable as we can; and conclude, the shortest Way to Greatness is the best: And if there should lye any Exceptions against the Methods of gaining our Advancement, we'll make Amends for that in the Management of it; though what Fault can proceed from such a Nobleness of Spirit? What Reflection can it be to aspire after that Glory the *Messiah* was so illustrious for? Thus the Vanity of Mens Minds, which easily corrupts their

Judgments, might have impos'd upon them, if our Saviour's *Kingdom had been of this World*. Thus Ambition might have been consecrated, and Pride mistaken for one of the Virtues of the Gospel; at least, they would have had a stronger Temptation to over-rate the Enjoyments of this Life, if the Son of God had made so liberal an Use of them.

IV. Poverty and a State of Suffering were more agreeable to the true Characters of the Messiah, upon these three Accounts,

1. Because they gave him an Opportunity for the Exercise of the most difficult and noblest Virtues.

2. Because such Circumstances were most agreeable to the Nature of his Gospel.

3. Because such an uneasy Condition is a most powerful Motive to endear his Memory; and consequently to make the World more inclinable to observe his Laws.

I. Because

I. Because Poverty and a State of Suffering were more agreeable to the true Character of the *Messiah*.

'Tis true Prosperity and Greatness lay many Temptations in our Way, which it's very commendable to conquer: Moderation, and Temperance, and Humility are shewn to most Advantage under such Circumstances. To keep within the Rules of Decency, and Sobriety, and Justice, when a Man has nothing to restrain him but his own Reason, is an Argument of regular Inclinations, and great Government of himself: But then it must be said that there is no great Uneasiness and Self-Denial in the Exercise of these Virtues; they neither refuse the Mind, nor the Senses any Satisfaction, which is naturally agreeable to them; nothing but the Prejudice of an ill Habit can make them in the least troublesome: And if they should sometimes put such a Person to some little Trouble, he has Honour and Observance, and all the Conveniences of Wealth and Power to support and encourage him. But the Virtues of a suf-

fering State are not practicable without Difficulty; they are not to be purchas'd without Labour, and great Expence of Merit: For Poverty, and Pain, and Disgrace go against the Grain of human Nature; they are uneasy to Flesh and Blood, and neither the Body nor the Mind often agrees well with them: Adversity supposes Danger, and Pain and Opposition in the very Notion of it; and therefore to stand our Ground, and maintain a true Decorum in such Circumstances is no ordinary Commendation. The Esteem we have for Integrity and a brave Action, can never be shewn so well as by such a Tryal: Our Constancy and Resolution must have a potent Adversary, otherwise it can neither be discover'd to others, nor yet to our selves: But to look Danger in the Face without Concern, not to be disorder'd with Pain, nor dejected with ill Treatment, argues an invincible Firmness, an heroick Nobleness of Mind, which raises a Man almost above the Reach of Accidents, and secures him from sinful Compliance; it makes his Reason
absolute

absolute and free, his Actions innocent and graceful, so that he will not be either flatter'd or frighted out of his Conscience, nor servilely depend upon the Frowns and Smiles of Power. But when the Submission to all this Hardship is voluntary and unconstrain'd; when it's undertaken out of a publick and charitable Design, to encourage Imitation, and transfuse a Spirit of Greatness into others; when there is a generous Freedom shewn, and a publick Character supported, and unacceptable Truths deliver'd in a low and obscure Condition: This adds a new Lustre to the Action, and makes it much more considerable than if the same Thing had been done under the Countenance and Protection of Greatness and Power. Adversity is certainly the Post of Honour, and gives us the best Opportunity to distinguish our selves. Our blessed Saviour therefore submitted to these Circumstances of Disadvantage, and endured so *great Contradiction of Sinners, that he might be perfect through Suffering*; that his Example might be more beneficial; that

we might learn from him to bear the Misfortunes of Life with Patience and Decency ; that he might animate us to adhere unalterably to our Duty, and be Masters of a more undaunted and resolute Virtue.

2. A mean and afflicted Condition was more agreeable to the true Character of the *Messiah*, because such Circumstances were most likely to promote the Design of the Gospel. 'Tis true, it is no Sin to be rich and powerful ; we may make use of the Conveniences of Life when they are fairly laid in our Way ; nay, in this Degeneracy of Mankind, large Fortunes and Grandeur are in some sort necessary to Persons in publick Stations, to put the Vulgar in Mind where they ought to pay their Obedience, and keep up the Reputation of the Government ; but then it's the Weakness of Mens Understandings, and their immoderate Esteem of the Enjoyments of this Life, which occasions this Necessity. Now the Design of the Christian Religion is to rectifie our Apprehensions about these Things, to disengage our

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Affections

Affections from this World, and to raise them to the Pursuit of a more noble and lasting Happiness. This Religion is intended to give us the fullest Conviction that *a Man's Life does not consist in the abundance of those Things which he possesses*; that the Value of these Honours and Advancements, which are so eagerly pursued by the Ambitious, consists more in Fancy than in any real Worth: They set him indeed upon higher Ground, and those beneath him ought to take Notice of it, but then they make no true Addition to the Stature of his Being: They leave our Nature as frail and mortal as ever, and are no more than a decent Varnish which enriches no deeper than the Surface; and therefore those who are considerable in this World, are *charged not to be high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches*; for Contempt, or at least Indifference to these Things, is a better Argument of Greatness than the Possession of them. This Doctrine teaches us, that the most desirable Exercise of Power is to govern our selves, that *Godliness with Contentment*

Contentment is the greatest Gain ; that Justice, and Generosity, and Charity, are more honourable than the most magnificent Titles without them. The Holy Writings plainly inform us, our Saviour did not come to encourage a martial Spirit, to make it a glorious thing to kill and destroy, and to set the World on Fire about Empire and Dominion : No, he took the Government upon his Shoulders, that Righteousness and Peace might flourish, that Men might beat their Swords into Plow-shares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks ; that Nation might not rise against Nation, nor learn War any more. He intended, as himself speaks, that his Kingdom should be within us, to set up his Standard in the Soul, and to make all the Weapons of his Warfare spiritual. His Power was to be employ'd against the Works of the Devil, to batter down Pride and Covetousness, Anger and Revenge, those great Disturbers of human Society : To subdue every high thing that exalts it self against the Knowledge of God, and to bring into Captivity every Thought

Thought to the Obedience of his Gospel.

Now, what could be a more proper Expedient to effect this admirable Design, than an obscure and afflicted Condition? For there could be no better Proof of the Meaning and Disinterestedness of his Laws, than by making them the Rule of his own Actions. His Contempt of the World, his Patience, and Meekness, and Resignation, the Practice of his own Beatitudes upon himself, the exact Uniformity between his Life and Doctrine, is a powerful Recommendation of his Institution, and frees it from those Exceptions which lay against the Philosophers, whose Harangues were chiefly disregarded, because what they did and said were not of a piece, because they wanted either the Honesty, or the Courage to try their own Arguments upon themselves; which leads me to the last Reason, why a mean and afflicted Condition was more agreeable to the true Character of the *Messiah*.

3. Because the submitting to such uneasy Circumstances is a most powerful Motive
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to endear his Memory, and consequently to make the World more inclinable to observe his Laws. If our blessed Saviour had declar'd his Will by a Voice from Heaven, or by the Ministry of Angels, or by the Inspiration of Prophets; if he had convers'd with us in a glorify'd and impassible Body, and shewn us the Way to Virtue, to Heaven, and Happiness, without any Inconvenience, without any Diminution of himself; such a gracious Communication ought to have been receiv'd with great Reverence and Gratitude. But those Favours which are purchas'd with Fatigue and Difficulty, at the Expence of Sweat and Blood, are still more valuable, because they are more noble Testimonies of the Love and Generosity of him that bestows them. So that the Son of God by bearing so many Indignities, and submitting to such a State of Poverty and Suffering, as he has given the highest Proof of his Affection, so he has laid the greatest Obligation of Gratitude upon us. Now all those who are of an ingenuous Temper, who

who have any thing of Worth, or Good-nature; in short, all those who deserve to be happy, have always a deep Sense of Gratitude in them, which makes them have a peculiar Regard for the Memories and Instructions of those who have oblig'd them at their own Disadvantage, especially when the Wisdom, as well as the Kindness of their Benefactors is apparent: And therefore our Saviour by condescending to the Miseries of this mortal Life, and by shewing such an unparallell'd Instance of his Love, has given the firmer Establishment to his Laws; for the best Way to command the Actions of Men not altogether deprav'd, is to gain their Affections by Kindness and Condescension. Thus we see the wise as well as the gracious Design in the obscure Appearance of the Son of God. For thus the antient Prophecies were accomplish'd; thus Ambition is discountenanc'd, the noblest Virtues exercis'd, and the Obligation heighten'd in a singular Manner. Now the best Way of shewing our Thankfulness
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is by imitating his Example; for, besides that it is an Argument of our Esteem, and the most acceptable Service we can pay him, the Reason is, because this is the only Expedient to make us happy: For God, who is infinitely perfect and can have no Design of his own, is best pleas'd with his Creatures when they do those Things which are most for their Advantage. Let us therefore follow the Steps of our great Master, by Patience and Resignation, by Charity, and Contempt of the World. Let us hold fast our Integrity, and keep a Conscience void of Offence amidst the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life, that at his second Coming to judge the World, when he will assume his own proper Greatness, and appear in the Glory of the Father, we may be found an *acceptable People* in his Sight.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, &c.

S E R M O N



SERMON IV.



PHILIP. iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing.



IS the sole Privilege of an all-sufficient Being to be perfectly above Solitude: Nothing short of an Almighty Power, which can command all Conveniences, and secure all Events, is naturally able to procure an absolute Tranquillity, and to make the Mind wholly unconcern'd about the future: For those who depend upon a foreign Assistance for their Preservation and Happiness, as all Creatures do; those,
if

if they have no stronger Support than themselves, can't chuse being uneasy under the Sense of their own Insufficiency. All rational Beings who are subject to a superior Power, who find themselves expos'd to Chance and Disappointment, and meet with unconquerable Difficulties; if they are not perfectly stupid, Self-Love will awaken their Cares, and raise a Disquiet within them: This must be their Case 'till they have found a Protection they may safely rely upon. An indigent and defective Nature, especially when it's ill-managed, is the necessary Cause of all those Passions which perplex humane Life: For what is the Reason of Desire or Fear, of Pity, of Anger, and the like? Why 'tis because our Power is not equal to our Will, because we either want something we have a mind to, or are afraid of losing that which pleases us.

'Tis because we can't change and continue Things, punish and reward according to our Inclination, nor fix our selves and others in that Condition we desire. And though our Passions were regularly order'd,

order'd, yet the apprehending our Circumstances ill supply'd or unfortify'd, would occasion many uneasy Thoughts, from which it were impossible to disengage our selves without having Recourse to the Divine Assistance. This alone is able to remove our Grievances, to satisfy all our Desires, and secure us from all our Fears : And therefore when the Apostle exhorts the *Philippians* to *be careful for nothing*, he immediately adds, *but by Prayer and Supplication let your Requests be made known unto God.*

If he had not directed to this Remedy, his Advice had not been so easily practicable ; for though, as I shall prove afterwards, an anxious Solicitousness turns to no Account, yet those who are *without God in the World*, and have nothing but the Arm of Flesh to trust in, can hardly be so far Masters of their Passions as not to be frequently disorder'd, either by the actual Sense, or the Apprehension of Misfortune.

But though we are to rely upon the Divine Providence in this World, as well

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as for our Happiness in the other, yet we are not to suppose that God will provide for us in a miraculous Way. We are not to resign our selves to Carelessness and Sloth; if we expect Success in our Affairs, we must make use of the ordinary Means for attaining it; we must consult our Abilities, throw our Business into a proper Method, and pursue it with Diligence and Application: For as *Solomon* observes, *Idleness will cloath a Man with Rags*. This Doctrine holds still under the Gospel, otherwise S^t *Paul* would not have told us, that he who does not provide for his House *has deny'd the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*: And he elsewhere affirms, that those who were not furnish'd with a competent Provision, if they would not *work, neither should they eat*. And in his Epistle to *Titus*, that those under his Care should learn to *maintain good Works for necessary Uses*; that is, as *Grotius* and Dr. *Hammond* expound it, "They ought to profess some Calling to supply them with the Conveniencies of Life". 'Tis true,

true, the vith of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke* xii. 24. seem to forbid Christians all manner of Care and Industry about the Things of this Life, for our Saviour commands expressly, *Take no Thought for your Life*; and to illustrate his Meaning, he bids us *consider the Ravens, that they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns, and yet God feedeth them.* And though these Places are usually interpreted concerning an over-anxious Carefulness, yet the Similitude which is us'd to press this Duty being taken from *the Fowls of the Air and the Lillies of the Field*, the Command seems to enjoin us as great an Unconcernedness as there is in them. Now because, as we have shewn, the Scripture in other Places both allows and commands a regular and moderate Industry; therefore if the Meaning of these Places is to be expounded according to the Strictness of the Instances our Saviour mentions, thence it's plain, this Command of *taking no Thought* has a peculiar Respect to the Condition of his Disciples, and is not to be drawn into a general Rule for other

Christians. And that we are thus to understand it appears probable ; for
St. Luke after our Saviour had commanded the
xii. Audience to *beware of Covetousness*, he applies himself particularly to his Disciples ;
x. 22. *And he said unto his Disciples, I say unto you, take no Thought for your Life, but consider the Ravens, &c.* As if he had said, You are not in the least to concern your selves about temporal Conveniencies ; for God will provide for you in the same extraordinary Manner that he does for *the Fowls of the Air and Lillies* ; that when you are thus secure of a Maintenance, and your Thoughts are thus perfectly disengaged from the Things of this World, you may be the better qualify'd to attend your Employ, and discharge your Office. That this Command is to be thus interpreted, with a particular Regard to the Disciples, seems to appear farther from
x. 4. St. Luke ; where when they were sent out to preach, they are order'd to *carry neither Purse, nor Scrip, nor Money*. 'Tis true, our Saviour gives them a contrary Order,

Order, *S^c Luke* xxii. 35. which imply'd they were to take some Care of themselves ; and accordingly we find them at the old Employment of Fishing, *S^c John* xxi. But then we are to consider, that this was at the Time of our Saviour's Passion, when their Preaching was intermitted ; for after his Resurrection, when they enter'd solemnly upon their Office, it's pretty plain by their Practice, that they understood our Saviour had discharg'd them from taking Care about their Maintenance : For *S^c Paul* tells us, that they all *forbore working*, and that he had the same Liberty. ^{1 Cor. ix. 6.} This Care therefore of taking no Thought about Necessaries being proper only to the Apostles, it follows both from these Texts, and the Tenor of the Scriptures, that Providence expects others should supply their Wants by the Methods of Prudence and Industry. The Apostle's Design therefore is only to dissuade us from being over-solicitous about the future, and from troubling our selves, because Things don't always go just as we

would have them ; *Be careful for nothing*, i. e. You who are slenderly supply'd, be not dissatisfy'd because your Share of the World is no greater ; and you who have a larger Provision made you, don't disquiet your selves because your Circumstances are not fortify'd to your Mind, but in your Apprehension at least seem unusually expos'd to Danger and Accident. This seems to have been the Case of those Christians the Apostle wrote to, who had already suffer'd some Severities from the Malice of the *Jews*, and had Reason to expect worse Measure from them afterwards : But in general, all Anxiety, or Dissatisfaction with our present Condition, is forbidden.

I. Therefore I shall endeavour to shew the Unreasonableness and ill Effects of such a Temper, from six Considerations.

II. I shall offer some farther, and possibly more direct Reasons for the preventing or removal of it.

I

I. The

I. The Unreasonableness and ill Effects
of such a Temper.

1. Because Anxiety and Discontent won't mend our Affairs, but rather tends to make them worse. 'Tis true, we are allow'd, and if we would be prosperous we must take Care to put our Concerns in the best Posture, and set them in the most likely way for Success: We must make use of all proper Opportunities, and pursue every honest Advantage; and when we have performed this, we have nothing more to do but to rest the Event with Providence. For to expect the Issue with Impatience and Concern, to perplex our selves for Fear of Mis-carriage, or to be troubled at an actual Disappointment, is to no manner of Purpose. Tho' a timorous and discontented Humour is powerful enough to disquiet the Mind, yet it seldom has any Force where it should have. Indeed, if we could give our Condition any Advantage by our Disquiet, if we could remove any Difficulties, or lessen any Misfortunes, then, as *Jonah* speaks, we did *well to be angry*. But alas, the Causes of our Trou-

bles are too firmly settled to be blown away with the Blast of Discontent : All the Strength of our Fears and Wishes signifies nothing towards the altering the Course of Nature, nor makes it e'er the more compliant with our Inclinations. The Husbandman may repine at the Unsuitedness of the Seasons, but his Mind has no Influence upon the Air ; all his Impatience can neither *stay the Bottles of Heaven, nor command the former nor the latter Rain.* The Marriner may torment himself because the Winds and the *Sea will not obey him* ; but if he could raise as great a Storm within him as he has sometimes without, it would signify nothing to his Voyage, nor bring him e'er the sooner to the *Haven where he would be* : And it's often to as little Purpose to concern our selves about the Practices and Dispositions of Men. Our vexing our selves at any Man's Knavery won't make him honest, nor the Loss we have sustained e'er the less : We may be displeased as much as we will at the Moroseness of an ill-natured Person, but our Resentment

ment seldom makes him more agreeable; if he knows it, 'tis more likely to make him the worse. And since things are too cross and inexorable to listen to our Complaints, and to be moulded according to our Fancies; after we have made as good a Provision as our Abilities will permit, 'tis much Wiser to be as indifferent as we can about the Event, and let the World take its Course: 'Tis more prudent to manage thus, than vainly to perplex ourselves about that which is not in our Power to prevent. But when People see their Expectations unanswered, their Merit overlook'd, and their Industry unrewarded; when they see others of lesser Understanding, lesser Industry, and lesser Honesty than themselves, *prosper in the World, and have Riches in Possession*: Is not this sufficient to warrant their Indignation? Now supposing Men state the Case rightly between their Neighbours and themselves, and are less fortunate than others of meaner Pretences; yet they had much better be contented with their Lot, than trouble themselves about
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the unequal Distribution of Rewards. If we are disappointed of our Hopes, though they are but moderate and fair; if we suffer any surprizing unforeseen Loss in our Estates, if others are prosperous not only beyond their Deserts, but even above the Vanity of their Expectations, and we are as much unsuccessful on the other Side; why, if it does happen thus, our growing mutinous and male-contented won't mend the Matter. A Man is never the richer for lamenting his Poverty; he may trouble himself long enough before he will be able to turn Misfortunes into Success, purely by the Strength of his Dissatisfaction. When Things fall out unluckily in any remarkable Manner, they often bring some necessary Inconveniencies with them, which the wisest Management can't avoid; and therefore, it must be great Indiscretion to add Weight to that which is naturally apt to press too hard upon us. Sufficient for the *Day is the Evil thereof*: Men find that Adversity is not so easy a Thing to digest, they have enough to do to manage it when they do
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their best: They need not make any voluntary Additions to their Misfortune, and heighten it by Melancholy and Discontent. Either we can remedy that which makes us uneasy, or we cannot; if we can, why don't we go about it? why do we chuse to be unhappy? why do we spend that Time in idle and insignificant Complaints, which if generously employ'd, would take away the Causes of our Grievance? But if the Evil be out of our Power to remove, 'tis in vain to struggle with it; for why should we be disordered about that which we cannot help? It may be said that it is impossible not to be troubled at an irreversibile and unconquerable Evil; for when it surmounts our Strength to remove, it becomes as it were fatal to us, and haunts us where-ever we go. This must be but a melancholick Prospect, and is enough to make an Impression upon the best hardned Courage. To which I answer, that when an Evil is intolerable in it's own Nature, when it's occasioned by our own Folly, when it's strictly endless and irremediable; then

then our Apprehension of its necessary Continuance, must make us more unhappy, because it shews us that extream Misery is as it were incorporated in our Nature; that it's co-extended with our Being, and waits upon every Part of our Duration, and therefore Despair is without Question a great Aggravation of the Punishment of the damned. But those Disasters with which Men are disquieted here, are of a different Nature; for they are supposed to happen by Providence, or the Injustice of our Neighbours, and not to proceed from our own Mismanagement. They are not so great but they may be born with Patience, and are so far from being endless, that at the worst they must necessarily be over in a few Years; and therefore there is none of the same Reason why we should disquiet our Minds at temporal Inconveniencies; for though they are too hard for us now, though we can't disengage our selves from them at present, yet they may be thrown off by some unexpected Deliverance. But if we don't enflame them by our Impatience, their
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their Malignity will abate by Degrees, and they will grow more easy by Use and Custom; however, we are sure they can't out-last this Life, and since there is no Necessity for disturbing our selves about these Things, it must be a very unaccountable Management to make our Condition worse than we need; and if an actual Affliction should not disorder and dispirit us, then certainly the bare Apprehension of one ought not to do so. Some People like their present Condition well enough, but they are afraid it will not hold. They fancy there hangs a Cloud over their Heads, which will one Time or other break out with Thunder and Tempest upon them; but Experience shews that Men are not infallible in these Cases, and that their Fears are sometimes as vain as their Hopes. But suppose their Prefages were certain, won't the Calamity reach them soon enough except they go out and meet it? Why do they torment themselves before their Time, and make their Unhappiness longer than God and Nature intended it, Indeed to foresee an Evil in order to the

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preventing

preventing, or to prepare our Minds to bear it, is prudent and pious : But to use our Consideration only to vex and distract our Minds, is a monstrous way of perverting our Reason, and turns the Privilege of our Nature into a Disadvantage. A Man had better sink into the Stupidness of a Brute, and not think at all, than do it to so ill Purpose. Vexation is so far from lessening, that it's a most certain Aggravation of it, by adding more Ingredients of Evil to its Nature. Indeed the very Essence and Formality of an Evil lies in the Troublesomeness of it : For an Affliction is nothing but a painful and uneasy Condition, so far is disquieting our selves from lessening any part of Adversity ; and since Anxiety can do us no good, one would think I need not urge any other Arguments against it. 'Tis a Contradiction to a rational Being to engage in Actions which signifie nothing. Suppose the Employment was not unacceptable, yet no wise Man would spend his Time and Thoughts upon Things which can make him no Return, and tend
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to no Point. But then to part with our Ease and Repose, with the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds without any valuable Consideration ; to be at such vast Expence, and have nothing in exchange ; to disturb our Thoughts, and make our Lives burthensome to no Purpose, is such a Reproach to our Understandings, such a Reflection upon our Pretences to Reason, that it makes our Sufferings uncreditable, and adds Shame to our Misery ; and therefore if we can't be weary'd into a kinder Usage of our selves, the Dishonourableness of such a rigorous Method ought to persuade us to give it over. But are we sure Anxiety and Discontent does us no good ? Does it not help to bring us out of an undesirable Condition the sooner ? For the more uneasy any Posture is, the more willing People are to change it. To this I answer, that Thoughtfulness and Dissatisfaction is so far from producing this good Effect, that it usually fixes Men in those Circumstances they dislike : For the Cause of this discontented Humour proceeding commonly

monly from frequent Diiappointments ; this hard Usage, as they fancy it, is apt to make them grow sullen ; they wrap themselves up in a listless and lethargical Melancholy, and think it beneath them to hazard their Labours upon Uncertainties any more. They expect they should be courted into a better Condition, importuned to accept of Prosperity ; and therefore if Success won't wait upon them and fall into their Lap, they are resolved to seek no farther after it ; and thus by thinking to revenge themselves of their ill Fortune, they often perpetuate it and make it worse. But though they are not thus overgrown with the Spleen, but are contented to do something towards their Enlargement, yet an anxious and over apprehensive Temper is apt to disable them from performing any thing considerable ; for either they fret away their Strength, and let their Spirits evaporate in the Heat of Discontent, or they don't do their best for fear it should prove to no Purpose ; or else they are beaten off their Metal by ill Success, and therefore they
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have not the Heart to make any vigorous Pursuit : Like a Coward, they seem afraid to strike hard lest they should provoke the Difficulty ; so that upon one Account or other their Attempts are feeble and dispirited, which hinders them from gaining their Point ; their Designs flag in the Execution, and don't carry home, for want of Courage to impress sufficient Force and Motion into them. 'Tis Part of the Nature and Effects of Anxiety, to make Men believe they shall be unsuccessful : Now such a Persuasion has an ill Influence upon their Affairs ; Fear and an ominous Distrust of the Event is the usual Fore-runner of Miscarriage. *Fear* (as the wise Man observes) *betrays the Succours which Reason offers* ; it checks the Courage of our Thoughts, and cramps our Endeavours : It makes us apt to drop our Hopes, and surrender our Strength to every little Opposition, which, if manag'd with Spirit and Discretion, had been sufficient to have made us Masters of the Enterprize.

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2. Anxiety and Discontent is apt to spoil Mens Dispositions, and make their Behaviour unacceptable and imprudent.

When Men are dissatisfy'd with their Condition, when they neither like the present State, nor the Prospect of it; when their Minds are uneasy and disorder'd with Fears and Disappointments: If they let these Impressions continue, they are apt to sour their Humour, and make them fall out with the World. Possibly they have been often circumvented and met with some unexpected Knavery; upon this they are apt to entertain hard Thoughts of the whole Kind; that all *the Children of Men are deceitful upon the Weights*; that they are not to be trusted nor valued any longer; and by this hasty Conclusion they model their Actions, and grow selfish, suspicious, and unconvertible. Thus we may observe some Persons, who when their Affairs went smoothly, and the World smil'd upon them, were remarkable for an obliging and prudent Conversation; but when a Cloud has
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happen'd to come over them, when their Circumstances grow streight, then they turn Male-contents, and the Change of their Affairs works violently upon their Passions, and produces a Change in their Persons too: And there seems to be as great an Alteration within them as without; that Sweetness and Evenness of Temper, that prudent Reservedness, that graceful and dispassionate Way of Converse, which was so visible in them before, is all vanish'd: Instead of this they seem to sympathise with their Condition, and to decline and grow worse as fast as their Fortune.

Now they are become peevish, rough, and exceptions; they are not so generous in their Actions, nor so decent in their Censures; so careful in a proper Observance of Persons and Times as they were before: They think their hard Luck will excuse them, and therefore they sometimes take the Liberty to say and do almost any thing, fall on with blind and undistinguishing Passion upon Friends and Foes. In short,

their Carriage is neither so agreeable, so prudent, nor so innocent as formerly ; their Minds are over-cast with Melancholy, and therefore they can't see so well about them as to stand upon their Guard : They are as it were loaden and sore with Discontent, and therefore the least Rub is apt to put them out of Order, and make them resenting and impatient ; and these ill Effects make Way for others : For when we are thus out of Humour, we are most likely to be surpris'd by an Enemy. When Men are dissatisfy'd about the State of Things, and mightily solicitous lest they should steer to a wrong Point, they only want a good Manager to make his Advantage of them. If they are but humour'd with Address, or provok'd by some surprising Question or Management, 'tis odds if they don't make an unfortunate Discovery of their Passion, and expose themselves to Shame and Danger too. Now, who would indulge himself in Discontent, and run the Hazard of being ill-natur'd, of disobliging his Friends, and gratifying his Enemies ?

I

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What considering Person would grow troublesome to Society, and lose his Reputation, and expose himself to further Miscarriages, when he only gets Vexation for his Pains, and must expect to lose the Esteem, the Pity, and a great Share of the Assistance of his Neighbours by such a Behaviour?

3. This Temper implies a Complaint against Providence; for why are we displeas'd with our Condition? Why are we so anxious about the Future, but that we believe the World is not regularly manag'd; that God is either unconcern'd in the Affairs of Mankind, or else that he does not proceed according to Equity in the Distribution of Punishments and Rewards? 'Tis likely we are not always aware that the Charge runs thus high; but if we will take the Pains to reason a little, from the Principles of our Discontent, we shall find that it supposes a Complaint against God, as if *the Judge of all the World did not do Right*. For if we were pleas'd with the Government of the World; if we believ'd Pro-

vidence took that Care of us which we had Reason to expect, it was scarce possible for us to be discontented with our present Allotment, or to disquiet ourselves with Fears of future Misfortune: What therefore does our Melancholy, our anxious Distrust, our pensive Dissatisfaction, amount to less than a plain Expostulation, that he does not regard us with the Care and Tenderness of a Creator; that he has *forgotten to be gracious*, and that *his Mercy is clean gone for ever*? 'Tis in Effect to tell him, that he sent us weak and defenceless into the World, and then left us to provide for ourselves; that he has plac'd us in a State where we are expos'd to Hazard and Necessity, where the Causes of our Misfortune are many and powerful, yet he has neither made our Nature strong enough to defend and supply itself, nor yet vouchsafes to interpose in our Behalf; that he leaves his Offspring to struggle with unconquerable Difficulties, with the sudden and uncertain Violences of Chance, with the Malice and Passions of ill Men.

How often is the Rage of Fire and Water let loose upon us? How many Diseases and Dangers are we beset with? How often are we oppress'd by the Mighty, circumvented and betray'd by the Faithless and Designing? And how impossible is it for such unfortify'd, such short-sighted Creatures as we are, to prevent these Things? Though we *rise up early, and late take Rest, and eat the Bread of Carefulness*; though we pursue our Designs by none but just and allowable Means, yet our Honesty is discourag'd, our Labours thrown away, and a Spirit of Ill-luck seems to haunt us wherever we go. And since our Case is thus hard, certainly we may be allow'd to be troubled at it; since Providence takes so little Notice of us; since we are liable to many Dangers, surrounded with so many Enemies; have we not Reason to fear the Success of our Affairs, and be concern'd at the Insecurity of our Condition? This is the Language of Discontent, this is the Meaning of an anxious Spirit: Thus *Men charge God foolishly,*

and complain of the Administration of his Government; whereas did they consider as they ought, they would forbear all such unreasonable, such unbecoming Reflexions; they would then perceive that God has been more liberal to the least of them than they can pretend to; that their Misfortunes are sometimes owing to their Negligence and Folly; that they are sometimes sent for the Punishment of their Sins, or the Tryal of their Virtues; and sometimes they fare the worse for living promiscuously with ill Men; for the Judgments of God are often executed in a natural Way, and don't make any miraculous Distinction between the Wicked and the Righteous, for that will be effectually done in the other World.

But Discontent makes Men so unreasonable as to complain against the wise and merciful Designs of Providence, and to quarrel the establish'd Laws of the Creation; the *Winds and the Sea must obey them*, and all the Elements be at their Disposol, if you would give them Content.

Content. The Freedom of Mens Wills must be over-rul'd, for their Humour and Security, tho' the being of Good and Evil is destroy'd by it; as if none ought to have the Liberty of doing extravagant Things but themselves: so that God must alter his Works and his Nature too to please them, for they seem neither satisfy'd with the one, nor the other.

4. Anxious Thoughtfulness is apt to put us upon redressing our Grievances by indirect and unwarrantable Courses. This Effect usually follows from that which I last mention'd; for when Men are so unreasonable as to think that God deals hardly with them, when they think he has abandon'd them to Chance; or that his Providence fetches too large a Compass, and keeps them too long out of their Wishes: This is apt to make them take the nearest Way to their Designs, whether they are the fairest or not, and to chuse the most probable Methods for Success, without any Regard to the Justice of them. Thus when the Murmuring of the Children of *Israel* had condemn'd
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xiv. 41.

them to a wandering and uneasy Life in the Wilderuess; because God did not carry them into the Land of Promise so soon as they desir'd, they are resolv'd to wait the Leisure of his Providence no longer. Upon this, they fight the *Amorites*, tho' against his expresse Command; as if they could conquer not only without his Assistance, but without his Leave. Thus when *Saul* by his Disobedience had provok'd God to reject him, when he refus'd to give an immediate Answer to his Enquiry, either by Dreams, Prophets, or *Urim*; being very solicitous about the Event of the Battle, and possibly expecting some Directions how to order it; since his Hopes were disappointed, and God was not pleas'd to give him any supernatural and miraculous Direction; upon this he complains he was forsaken; and then strikes off from the *Ark* to the *Witch of Endor*. Impatience and anxious Solitude is a very strong Temptation to Sinning. An uneasy discontented Mind is willing to purchase Relief almost upon any Terms. A Man that finds the
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Burthen press hard upon him, usually takes the first Opportunity to throw it off: he is too much perplex'd to weigh Justice by the Grain, and attend to the nice Distinctions of Good and Evil; and therefore he is resolv'd to close with the most effectual Remedy without any farther Enquiry about it. Since Virtue has prov'd so unprofitable a Quality, he thinks it's Time to steer a new Course: since his Conscience restrains him from the Liberty of providing for himself, and ties him up to a Posture of Disadvantage; since he has not better Fortune with it, he is resolv'd to shake off its Tyranny, and let it be his Master no longer. The same ill Effects follow from strong and unreasonable Fears, which partake of the Nature of Anxiety, when Men believe they shall be attack'd in their principal Concerns, and that there are formidable Preparations made against them. If they give themselves up to these Apprehensions, and suffer them to make any strong Impression; their Imaginations are often disorder'd to that Degree, as to be ready to hearken to any violent Counsels,

fels, and to engage in any unwarrantable Practices. The Sense of Danger which they have suffer'd to grow too fast upon them makes their Resolutions desperate ; for though the Terror of the Prospect may be owing in a great measure to their own Melancholy, yet it affects them as much as if it was real ; they are too much intent upon their own Preservation to afford any Attention to the Considerations of Right and Wrong. Sometimes their Understanding as well as their Conscience suffers by the Fright, which makes them transgress not only the Laws of Duty, but Prudence too ; and by their blind and precipitant Counsels plunge themselves in greater Evils than those they seek to avoid. These are some of the ill Consequences of a thoughtful and dissatisfy'd Mind, which is neither pleas'd with its present Circumstances, nor dares trust Providence for the future. I should proceed to the Remainder, but of that afterwards.

SERMON



SERMON V.

PHILIP. iv. 6.

Be careful for nothing.



FROM these Words I took Occasion to shew, That we were not to expect to be furnish'd with the Conveniencies of Life in a miraculous Way : That a regular Industry was not forbidden in the Text, and therefore it is in vain for us to expect to succeed in our Affairs, except our Undertakings are suited to our Abilities, except we proceed upon a reasonable Prospect, and pursue our Designs with Diligence

Diligence and Application ; and therefore that the Apostle's Meaning was only to dissuade us from being solicitous about the Issue of our Affairs, and from troubling ourselves, because our Circumstances don't stand in that posture we desire them.

From hence I proceeded to shew the Unreasonableness and ill Consequences of such an anxious Temper :

1. Because it does not mend our Affairs, but rather tends to make them worse. And here I observ'd, that our Prosperity depends in a great measure upon Causes that have neither Sense nor Understanding in them. It depends upon the Temperature or Rigor of the Seasons, upon Wind and Weather, Fire and Water. Now those Things are too deaf and inflexible to be mov'd with our Complaints ; our Fretting and Dissatisfaction, tho' it has a very sensible Effect upon ourselves, yet it is not strong enough to make an Impression upon the Body of Nature, or alter it into a Compliance with our Advantage. Besides, to be discontented makes us lose the Esteem of our Friends, and

and gives our Enemies a malicious Pleasure to see us out of Order: It checks and dispirits our Hopes, and makes our Undertakings feeble and languid.

2. Anxiety and Discontent is apt to spoil Men's Dispositions, and makes their Behaviour unacceptable and imprudent. This Sickness of the Mind has usually the same Effects with that of the Body; it makes Men nice and hard to be pleas'd, and ready to break out into Anger and Resentment upon the least Provocation. They have fallen into ill Hands, and been receiv'd to their great Prejudice, which makes them say, *In their Haste all Men are Lyars*; and thereupon they are apt to grow unreasonably suspicious, morose, and unconvertible.

3. Discontent and Anxiety implies a Complaint against Providence: Those who are thus affected charge God with Male-Administration, that he is either partial or inadvertent in his Government of the World; and that he does not take that Care of them which they think they deserve: And therefore,

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4. This Temper is apt to put us upon redressing our pretended Grievances by unwarrantable Courses. When we believe our selves unregarded by Providence, when we are very much displeas'd with our present Circumstances, and over solicitous about the future; when our Passions are strong, and our Reason disorder'd, we are apt to hearken to the first Proposals of Redress, and close with that which we conceive to be the most speedy and effectual Remedy, without ever enquiring into the Lawfulness of it.

Thus far I proceeded.

5. This Temper will make us negligent and careless in the Offices of Religion. *Aristotle* observes, " That the " Wealthy and Prosperous are in the best " Disposition to be religious ". Indeed, considering the Principles of the Heathen Religion, which afforded but a very obscure Prospect of the Rewards of the other World; considering the craving and impatient Nature of Men, who would gladly have something at present, and are not willing to wait for all their Happiness

ness 'till the other Life; considering these Things, the Philosopher was not mistaken in his Observation: Therefore, if Men believe Providence governs the World, as the Heathen generally did; if Prosperity does not corrupt their Minds, and make them degenerate into Pride and Atheism, if they don't *sacrifice* to their *own Nets*, and forget they have any Dependence upon a superior Being; if they retain a just Sense of Providence, their Condition will suggest many Thoughts for the Advantage of Religion: For when they consider that 'tis God who has made their Lot *fall in a fair Ground*, and that all their distinguishing Privileges come from him; when, as the Prophet speaks, they consider, that their *Gold* and *Silver*, their *Corn* and *Wine* is his; that their Ease, their Plenty, their Reputation are the Blessings of Heaven: Such Reflections are naturally apt to inspire them with Gratitude, to heighten their Devotions, and make them more constant and warm in their religious Applications. But those who think God deals rigorously with

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them, that he does not second their Endeavours, nor over-rule the Causes of their Misfortunes, which is the Language of Discontent: When Men give themselves up to such Thoughts as these, especially if they are of a haughty and impatient Spirit, this alienates their Affections from Religion, and perverts them, as it were, from their Allegiance to God Almighty; they sometimes grow profanely fullen, and are not only indifferent, but averse to his Service. They think themselves unaccountably disregarded by Providence, and in a fit of Impatience resolve to be even with it, as if they design'd a Revenge upon their Maker, and would return him his own Indifferency: But when their murmuring does not bring them to these *Atheistical* Excesses, yet *their Dissatisfaction* is apt to check the Spirit of their Devotion, and make them cold and unconcern'd in the Performance of it; they are apt to conclude with those in the Prophet *Malachi*, chap. iii. v. 14. that *It is in vain to serve God, and what Profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances,*

dinances, and walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? What are we the better for our Prayers? For the pious Fervour of our Souls, the constant Attendance upon his Worship, and for all the private and solemn Adoration which we have paid him? Don't they who neither keep his *Sabbaths*, nor reverence his *Sanctuaries*, nor frequent his Altars, prosper as well, nay better than we do? And since we see no Returns for all our Service, we can't continue it with that Vigour of Inclination, with that Joy and Satisfaction which otherwise we could do. These are the undutiful Complaints of a discontented Spirit: Thus it remonstrates against God, and these are the dangerous Consequences of it.

Farther, Anxiety and Dissatisfaction weakens the Powers of the Soul. It clouds our Understandings, and distracts our Affections, so that if we come to the Service of God under this Indisposition, we do in Effect but offer the *Blind* and the *Lame* to him. Our Minds must be sedate and undisturb'd, they must be

free from perplexing Cares and the Fatigue of worldly Business. Without being thus prepar'd, they will not be able to rise up to a due Contemplation of the invisible World; while our Thoughts are gloomy and divided, while our Passions are ruffled and run high, while the Concerns of this Life have such an Ascendant over us, it is impossible for us to worship God with that Attention, Fervency and Alacrity we ought. We can't *worship him in the Beauty of Holiness* under such a Discomposure; no, our Devotions will be broken, flat and languishing, and want that Uniformity, that Vigour and becoming Reverence which both the Person and the Business requires. We shall neither pray to him with Earnestness, nor praise him with Transport, nor rely upon him with an humble resigning Confidence; all which are both the Duties and Happiness of his Creatures. An anxious and repining Spirit makes us lose both the Benefit and the Pleasure of our Devotion; it makes Religion go heavily off, and be neither acceptable to God,
nor

nor to our selves. We see therefore it's impossible to be really good, without a cheerful and resigning Disposition, without banishing Thoughtfulness and Discontent. These are the unhappy Consequences of immoderate Care, which if they were duly attended to, were sufficient one would think to disengage us from them: But that they may be the more effectually prevented, I shall add these following Considerations.

1. Let us consider, that Anxiety and Discontent argues a weak and unfortify'd Mind. 'Tis confess'd there are some Afflictions, at which if we are somewhat out of Order, it will be excus'd upon the Score of humane Frailty; that is, when the Disaster was sudden, and touches us in the most sensible Part of our Passions: When it was unforeseen in its Causes, and severe in its Quality; such as great and unexpected Losses in our Fortunes, and in our Friends: These Things we may be troubled at when they first happen, because it's almost impossible to be otherwise; but when we have the most war-

rantably Occasion for Grief, we are not allow'd to let it continue upon us; after the first Impression is over, we are to shew ourselves Men and Christians, and to throw it off with Reason and Consideration. But those Things which disquiet the greatest Part of Mankind, are usually of a far inferior Nature: Most of the Malecontents are neither surpriz'd with the Suddenness, nor overwhelm'd with the Weight of a Misfortune: 'Tis Niceness and Spleen and Fancy more than any real Calamity, which puts them out of Order: As the Psalmist speaks, they *disquiet themselves in vain*; they are troubled, they don't know why, and afraid of they can't tell what.

Now to be always repining at our Condition, to be anxiously curious about future Events, and disquiet our selves, because we are not perfectly out of the Reach of Danger, is a Sign that the Constitution of our Mind is very tender and infirm, otherwise it would not be so often, and so easily disorder'd. When every little Rencontre will jostle us out of our
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Station, when every common Accident makes an Impression upon us, we may be assur'd we have not that Strength and Firmness within which might justly be expected: To be always complaining, and in Pain, is an Argument of an ill Habit of Soul, and that our Reason is fallen into a Distemper. Thoughtfulness and Discontent, when it's settled into a Habit, proceeds from Poorness of Spirit, and that a Man's Mind is perfectly under the Command of his Fortune; it argues him conscious of his own Weakness, that he has not the Courage to resist an Evil; whereas had he but Resolution to face it, he would be so much employ'd that he would not have Leisure to complain: His Blood would be so heated with the Sense of Honour, and the Hopes of Victory, that the Blows and Smart of the Encounter would scarce be felt. He that has a true Resolution is serene and undisturb'd, his Spirits don't rise and fall with his Circumstances; the actual suffering of Adversity can't deject him, much less will he be disorder'd with

the uncertain Fears of it; he relies upon his Innocence, and his God; and upon this Foundation he stands fix'd like a Rock: And though all the *Waves* and *Storms* may pass over him, yet he remains unshaken, and is like *Mount Sion which may not be removed, but stands fast for ever*. Though the World may be Master of his Fortune, yet he has always his Reason and his Passions in his own Power; his Mind is impregnable, and all the Shocks of Adversity can never deprive him of his Principles or his Peace. Such a Person rises upon a Opposition, and never shews greater Marks of Bravery than when the World frowns upon him; he knows his Courage was given him for such an Occasion, and that it can never be shewn with more Advantage, and less Suspicion of Vanity: But to murmur and lament our hard Fate, to grow pale at the Apprehension of Danger; to wait an uncertain Event with Trembling and Concern, is mean and unmanly. Now can those who are the *Offspring of God*, who value themselves upon

on the Privilege of Understanding, and expect to be rais'd to such a glorious Condition hereafter, can they be guilty of such abject and degenerate Thoughts? Let us not deliver up our selves to Melancholy, and vainly quarrel at the unalterable State of Things: Let not our Virtue be discourag'd by any cross Adventure which we either feel or fear; but let the Dignity of our Kind, and the Honour of our Religion, and the Greatness of our Hopes, inspire us with a nobler and better supported Spirit. Indeed, if we had no Reason to guide us, no God to protect us, and no Heaven to reward us, it would be next to impossible to keep us quiet, and to make us Proof against the Accidents of Life: But since we have the Light of Nature, and Revelation to direct us in our Journey; since God governs this World, and we have so fair a Prospect of the other, to despond, and sink under such powerful Encouragements, is a Sign of great Weakness and Degeneracy: This wounds our Reputation as well as our Innocence, and ought to make us blush
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to see our selves so dishonourably unhappy.

2. Let us consider, that it's much better for us to have our Affairs lodg'd in the Hands of Providence, than to have the Management and Event in our own Power. We are apt to fancy, that if God would give us leave to chuse our Post, and carve out our own Condition, we could make a most admirable Provision for our selves: If we could gain such a Point, and compass such a Design, we should be made for ever; when alas! we don't consider how many Inconveniencies might follow upon such a Change. The fair Appearances of Things invite us, and we are hurry'd on by a blind and eager Desire; but whether we are able to manage our Choice we are wholly ignorant; we don't know how many Dangers and Difficulties we should meet with, how many Snares would lie in our Way, and how unlikely it would be for our Virtue to hold out against so many Temptations. We don't consider how our Tempers and Passions are apt to vary with enlarged Circum-

Circumstances, and what a great deal of Circumspection and Steadiness of Thought is necessary to secure us : So that next to the Providence of God, we often owe our Safety to our Impotence; because we are not strong enough to throw our selves into Danger. One Man fancies if he could raise his Fortune to such a Pitch, he wou'd ask nothing further, and no Man should be happier than himself : But he does not seem to be aware that many are Masters of much more than he desires, and yet are visibly uneasy and discontented; and what Reason has he to believe that he shall be wiser and more moderate than the rest of his Neighbours? He does not consider that the Care of keeping, and the Desire of increasing their Riches, does often so busie and perplex Mens Minds that they have no Leisure to enjoy : He never thinks how many false and fantastical Appetites Riches are apt to excite in us, and that they usually create more Wants than they satisfy; that without abundance of Vigilance and religious Caution, we shall grow more nice and delicate, and resent-

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ing, than we were before ; which Temper must certainly put us into a State of Disadvantage, because there will be but a few Things able to give us any Satisfaction, but more than ever to put us out of order. And certainly 'tis not the Way to be happy to have the Number of our Pleasures retrenched, and the Causes of Pain and dislike encreased upon us. Another imagines there is a strange Mystery of Happiness lodg'd in Authority, and is mightily troubled to see himself shut out ; if he was once in Power, if he had a publick Stage to act upon, he would make an illustrious Figure, and rectifie many of those Disorders which disturb Society : But he is so unfortunate as to be confined to a private Station, he is buried in an obscure Retreat, he has not room enough to play his Parts and Sufficiency, nor Opportunities to shew the Greatness and Generosity of his Mind : But was he thoroughly sensible how dangerous a thing 'tis to be great, how much it lies expos'd to Envy and Flattery ; he would, at least he ought not to be so fond of it. If he
rightly

rightly apprehended how steep and slippery an elevated Station is, he would rather dread the Precipice than be eager to climb the Ascent. He would plainly perceive that a Man had need have his Head very steady and well pois'd, otherwise his Height will make him turn giddy : And when this happens, a false Step or a malicious Push is enough to set him going ; and then it's easy to guess what a Bruise he is like to get by the Fall, and how contemptibly he will look at the Bottom. If we are not well fortify'd with Prudence, with Humility and Resolution, it's not safe for us to venture upon Grandeur and Power ; for except we are thus furnish'd, our Condition will only serve to heighten our Vanity, and expose our Weakness, and make us guilty of more Sins and Follies than we were before. And therefore when Men take up a peremptory Resolution of being considerable, without examining how fit they are for it ; when their Understandings and Virtues are not proportioned to their Condition ; when little Minds and great Fortunes meet together, there is usually
nothing

nothing more unhappy and ridiculous. So that if the Success of our Desires was in our Power, 'tis easy to conceive how fatal it might prove to us: For how often should we overgrasp our Capacity, and sink under the Weight of our own Greatness? How often should we be overwhelm'd with our pretended Happiness, by making it too massy and pondrous for us to wield? And since the most tempting Condition which Mortals can propose to themselves, is so likely to make them unfortunate; is it not more prudent, as well as more pious to resign up our Choice to Providence, to acquiesce in his Disposal, and to think those Circumstances most proper which he has placed us in? For should God yield to the Importunity of our Complaints, his Favours might undo us; as the *Heathen* Poet in his rallying Way observes, that the Gods had ruin'd whole Families by being too easy in condescending to their Requests. And therefore *Socrates* in *Plato's Alcibiades* teaches us a very discreet Prayer, That God would give us those things
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which were convenient, though we did not ask them ; and deny us those which were not, though we did. God has a perfect Understanding of the Capacities and Inclinations of his Creatures, and what Effect every Condition will have upon them. He knows what we can bear and are fit for, and if we submit, ranges us accordingly. He takes a Prospect of universal Nature at once, and views the utmost Limits of Futurity. He foresees what Miseries we should be plunged in, if we were trusted to chuse for our selves ; what Rocks we should run upon if he allowed us to steer to our own Point ; and therefore in Mercy restrains us from so dangerous a Freedom, denys our fatal Wishes, and makes us happy against our Wills. And now is not an All-comprehending Wisdom the safest Director of our Affairs ? Can we have a better Protection than Omnipotence, and is it possible for any thing to be kinder to us than that Goodness which is infinite ? And since we are much more secure in God's Hands than in our own, how unreasonable, how ungrateful

grateful must it be to murmur at his Allotment, to distrust his Providence, and complain as if our Merit and Interest were overlook'd ?

3. Let us consider that cross Circumstances give us an Opportunity for the best Improvement of ourselves. Prosperity and constant Success makes Men tender and delicate, and apt to take check and grow uneasy at the least Accident that comes contrary to their Expectations. To miscarry in their Designs, is a Thing perfectly new, and they know not how to bear it : But when they are used to Disappointments, this Niceness wears off by Degrees ; and it must be a considerable Trouble which makes an Impression upon them. Crosses and ill Success rebate the Edge of our Desires, and make us cold in our Pursuits : This disengages us from the Love of these inferiour Things, and puts us upon enquiring after a Happiness which is out of the Reach of Chance. By Opposition and troublesome Rencounters the Mind, if there be any Spirit in it, grows resolute and firm, and is harden'd almost

into an invulnerable Temper. As Continuance makes the Pleasures of Life flat and unaffecting ; so Misfortunes when they grow familiar, and are frequently met with, don't look so terribly, and bring that Sting along with them which they did at first. The Quality of Good or Evil is very much raised by the Novelty and Rareness of it. The Passions are called up very sensibly at first, and struck with the Unusualness of the Sight ; a daily Converse abates very much of the Dread and Delight of it. As Prosperity gives us but a dull and ordinary Relish, after a long Enjoyment, seems enfeebled by its Age, and loses its Grace, and almost its Nature, by staying with us : So Adversity becomes less offensive by being customary, it grows smooth by wearing ; and when Men are once beaten to ill Accidents, they either don't feel, or learn to despise them. The Crossness of Events, if we manage it rightly, will have a good Effect upon the making our Conversation more prudent and correct. For when Men see things don't answer their

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Expectations, this makes them suspicious of themselves, they begin now to enquire strictly into their own Conduct, they examine very narrowly whether they have not been defective in Industry and Address, whether the Design has not fallen short for want of Management. Disappointment reinforces them for a fresh Attempt with useful Observations ; it awakens their Thoughts, and sets their Reason upon its guard : By being deceived they grow wary and circumspect, and won't put their Happiness into their Neighbours Power when they may keep it in their own ; nor needlessly trust the Success of their Affairs with the Honesty or Discretion of another. If they have any thing generous in them, the ill Success of their Designs won't discourage them : The Difficulties will only put them upon a better Preparation, and excite them to do their utmost. The Rubs and Resistance they meet with engages them to a Recollection, summons in their Spirits, and puts them in a Posture of Defence : It sharpens their Invention, and warms their Courage, makes them

them wiser in the Contrivance, and more resolute in the Execution. We see therefore that a State of Difficulty and Trial tends to make us more indifferent in our Wishes, more cautious and yet more vigorous in our Undertakings: The Soul is both furnished and fortify'd by it; these Circumstances are the proper Soil for Virtue to thrive in, for Wisdom and true Greatness to flourish, and grow remarkable. If we consult the Records both of sacred and prophane History, we shall find that Ease and Indisturbance seldom makes any Heroes. The most illustrious Examples, who have carried human Nature to the highest Pitch, have owed the bravest Part of their Character to the Troubles they met with: 'Twas Danger and Opposition which open'd their way to Glory: They were harras'd and persecuted into Greatness; and, as the Apostle speaks of our Saviour, *made perfect through Sufferings*. This made St. *Paul* glory in *Tribulations*, and St. *James* exhort his Converts to count it all Joy when *they fell into divers Temptations*: For, as he goes on, the

Tryal of their Faith would work Patience, and when Patience had her perfect Work, they would be entire, wanting nothing. This would teach them to silence their Fears, and check their Desires, and in a great Measure make them independent upon the Accidents of Life. And as that we call Misfortune is the most likely Discipline to train us up to Virtue and Greatness ; so it gives us the fairest Occasion to shew our Improvement. 'Tis true, a prosperous Man might behave very well under a different Condition ; but then this can't be known as long as his Prosperity continues. Those who never were in the Field may be Persons of great Resolution. The Honourable might bear Disgrace, and the Wealthy Poverty, with great Decency and Submission to Providence, if they were put upon it : But we can never be certainly assured that they have all this Worth and Spirit and Resignation, till they have undergone the Tryal. In an easy and undisturbed Condition the most noble Qualities of the Mind lie hid and undiscerned : In such Cases

Cases the Owner himself does not know how well he is furnished. For though his Inclinations may stand fair for Virtue, yet no man can tell the Strength of a good Resolution till he is put to the Proof; for many come on with a great deal of Bravery, and yet fail in the Encounter, not that they are deserted by Providence, but by themselves. They find the Trouble of the Temptation greater than they imagined, and therefore meanly surrender to it. But though we had an Assurance of our own Constancy, no body could know it but our selves except we were put to the Tryal. The Reputation of a great Mind would be lost this Way, and there would be nothing of Example for the Benefit of others. Who could ever have known that *Socrates* and *Regulus* and *Cato* were such invincible Spirits, had it not been for the Trouble they met with? Had they not been unfortunate they had been obscure, and Mankind had wanted those Instances of Heroick Fortitude to instruct them. 'Twas the strong

Temptations which *Abraham* and *Job* were exercised with, which made their Faith and Patience so much celebrated. This drew their Virtue into publick Notice, and made their *Light shine before Men* with so great Advantage. For, as the Son of *Syrach* observes, *Gold is tryed in the Fire, and acceptable Men in the Furnace of Adversity*, Ecclus. ii. Adversity is the only true Touchstone to try the Value of the Soul. It discovers the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart, and makes our Temper and Inclination more legible to the World. When Men are distressed by Malice or Casualty, or disappointed by Ingratitude; when they are unsupported, forsaken, or oppressed; when they are not propt up with any outward Advantages, then they have the fairest Occasion to shew the Strength and Independency of their Minds. Such Circumstances afford them the best Opportunities to shew how much the better they are for their Religion, and how far they are influenced by the Belief of another World. Now they may give unquestionable

questionable Proofs of the Esteem they have for a good Conscience, and a brave Action. This is the only Time to discover the Command they have over their Passions, how indifferent they are to the Things of this World, and to what Perfection of Patience and Fortitude and Resignation they are arrived. Affliction both improves and discovers a Man's Worth ; it shews how unconcern'd and sedate and magnanimous he can be under so many Discouragements : It sets his Virtues in the truest Light, puts them in the richest Equipage ; and thus they make a more illustrious Figure than they could do otherwise. And now supposing the Evils we labour under don't all proceed from the Niceness of our Imagination, but have some real Foundation in Nature ; yet when we consider how much the Advantage will over-balance the Inconvenience, this, one would think was enough to silence our Discontent. When we consider that if we don't mismanage the Opportunity, we are in the most probable Condition to grow wiser and better, and

to be remarkable for the most valuable Improvements our Nature is capable of: When we consider how great and graceful a thing it is to be contented with a little; to be above Contempt; to endure Pain without Impatience and Disorder. Thus to overlook the Malice and Impertinence of ill Men, to throw off the lesser Evils of Life with little or no Notice, and to bear the greater with Decency and Composure; this is to be great, above Title and Fortune, and makes a Man more considerable than the Empire of the whole World. The Consideration of this, one would think was sufficient to quiet and support our Spirits. A good Soldier does not think he is hardly dealt with when he is commanded upon a hazardous Action; but counts it a Mark of Esteem from his General. For though 'tis somewhat unnatural to desire Affliction, yet when it comes, a generous and Christian Spirit will make the best of it: Such a Person won't give up the Cause for lost, and fall into Dejection and Despair; but on the contrary, since he is placed in so creditable
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a Station, since Providence seems to confide in his Worth, and to think him fit to grapple with Trouble and Difficulty, he will endeavour to signalize himself accordingly, and do something fuitable to the Circumstances and Occasion. In short, since Crosses and Disappointments give the most undeniable Evidence of our Integrity; since they afford us the best Opportunities for the Exercise of the noblest Virtues, and are the most effectual Means to make us exemplary and considerable; to repine at them must be a Sign of Meanness and Ingratitude. 'Tis much more becoming and religious for Men to awaken their Spirits, and prepare for Action, and to be thankful to Providence for affigning them the Post of Honour.

Fourthly and lastly,

Let us consider, that the Time of Retribution is not to commence 'till the other Life, therefore it's unreasonable to be dissatisfy'd now. God has design'd this Life for a State of Probation; now our Constancy in a good Cause, our Faith and Dependence

Dependence upon the Promises of God, can't so well be try'd as by the Difficulties and Discouragements we meet with ; for if *Godliness* was always *present Gain*, and a Man was sure to grow rich and powerful this Way sooner than any other, then the Covetous and Ambitious would press into the Service of Religion ; for the greatest Quarrel they have against it is, that it often leads them too far about, and sometimes quite spoils their Design. If the *Ways of Wisdom* were *Ways of Pleasantness* to the sensual Man ; if the Discipline of a holy Life had nothing but Diversion in it, and there was more Entertainment in Fasting than in Eating, then an *Epicure* would turn Saint upon Principles of Luxury, and serve God that he might serve his Appetite the better. But this is not the Way to discover the Inclinations of Men, neither does God intend to make us happy at so cheap a Rate ; he has set the Purchase of Glory higher, and propos'd it in a Way suitable to the Generosity of our Minds ; he knows we naturally relish any Satisfaction the
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better, when we have done something towards the gaining it our selves. An easy Victory is always less honourable, and therefore we have no Reason to be displeas'd, that Providence enjoins us a laborious Exercise of our Virtues; that we should be obliged, like those S^c Paul mentions, to be *temperate in all Things*, and give sufficient Proof of our Resolution before we are *crowned*. Had not God design'd this World for a Place of Exercise and Combat, he would either not have permitted so many ill Men and Accidents in it, or else have secur'd the Good from their Violence. Had the Day of Recompence been here, the Condition of all Men would flourish in Proportion to their Virtues; then Splendor and Prosperity would be an infallible Mark of the true Church; for the *Righteous would be more excellent than his Neighbour*, not only in his Mind, but in his Fortune and Constitution too. We might discern the Improvements of Men by their Privileges, for when they came to an extraordinary Pitch of Goodness their Circumstances

cumstances would be remarkably distinguish'd and glorious, they would (contrary to *David's* Observation) *come in no Misfortune like other Folk, nor be plagued like other Men; they would spend their Days in Prosperity, and their Years in Pleasure, and have a Protection from the common Calamities of Life.* For then that of the Psalmist would almost be the literal Privilege of every eminent Saint, *Thou shalt not be afraid for any Terror by Night, nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day; for the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction which wastes at Noon-day; a thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy Right-Hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.* But God has thought fit to order Things otherwise, for if the Reward of Piety was always visible and present, the Value and Generousness of Virtue would very much abate; there would be no Room for Faith and Patience, and Men would be almost over-rul'd into their Duty.

And

And now since God has made this Life for the Proof of our Constancy and Obedience, and assign'd us over for Satisfaction to the other, it's unreasonable for us to quarrel the Terms of his Providence. To be impatient and importunate for Ease and Pleasure, before he has given us any Warrant to expect it, is a Sign we begin to be *weary of well-doing*, and think the Conditions of his Service over-rigorous. Indeed if the Distinction of Virtue and Vice was bury'd in the Grave, and carry'd *into the Land where all things are forgotten*; if there was no Book of *Remembrance* to be call'd over another Day; if in the other World we could not *discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that served God, and him that served him not*; if we had follow'd *cunningly devised Fables*, and all our Hopes of Happiness were groundless and visionary, then we might remonstrate with some Colour, and say, that we had *cleansed our Hearts in vain, and washed our Hands in Innocency*. But now since the
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Foundation of Religion is firm and immoveable; since the State of the other World is almost in View; since we have the highest Certainty which we can reasonably desire, that there is *a Reward for the Righteous, and a God that judgeth the Earth*: Now, to be uneasy and discontented looks as if we thought we did too much for God Almighty, and over-purchas'd the Joys of Eternity. We should do well to remember, that the *Israelites* were excluded the Land of Promise for this Sin, and therefore St. Paul cautions us expressly against it, *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroy'd of the Destroyer.*

1 Cor. x.
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And tho' we have all the Reason to believe that God will pity our Infirmit- ties, and not take so severe an Account of every peevish and melancholy Fit, yet we should be very careful that this Humour does not settle into a Habit, for then it may be of fatal Consequence to us; for what can be more unreasonable and dangerous than to be always im-
peaching

peaching the Justice of Providence, to go frowning and sullen into the other World, and to be angry with that God with whom, except we are lost, we must live for ever? We should do well to consider with what Patience and Chearfulness the Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors bore up under the greatest Temptations; how they triumphed over all the Terrors of Sense, and joyfully suffer'd much more than we have Reason to fear. And how unfit are we for the Society of those brave Spirits, if we are so nice and froward as to be discompos'd with every little Accident? Indeed, considering the Troubles of this Life are so short, and there are so many Helps to support us under them, some of which fall to every Body's Share; since God has promis'd to reward these *Sufferings for a Season with an eternal Weight of Glory*, there can be nothing more unreasonable than to behave as if we were hardly us'd, and go murmuring and complaining to Heaven. The Remembrance of such Meanness one would think was almost enough to interrupt

rupt the Joys of the other World, and to make us blush in the midst of our greatest Happiness. Let us therefore cheerfully acquiesce in that Condition Providence has plac'd us, and do, and suffer all Things without *Murmurings and Disputings* with God Almighty. Let us resign our selves to his Wisdom, and trust his Goodness, and always believe that his Way of disposing of us is the best. Let us consider with St. *Paul*, That *the Troubles of this present Life are not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which shall be reveal'd in us*; and learn with the same great Apostle, *In whatsoever State we are, therewith to be content.*

London,
April 1688.



SERMON



SERMON VI.

EPHES. iv. 26.

Be ye angry and sin not.



THE Troubles to which humane Life is incident, may be all reduc'd to bodily Pain or Passion. Pain proceeds from the infirmity and Indigence of our Nature; God in his Wisdom having united the Body and Soul upon such Terms, that when the former suffers any considerable Damage, the other is forc'd to receive an uneasy Account of it. For let a Man be never so brave, it's not possible for him

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to take no Notice of Hunger or Thirst ; to be unconcern'd upon the Rack, or under any acute Distemper ; these Things will be troublesome in Despight of all the Resolution and Philosophy in the World : Tho' I grant that a Mind fortify'd with Innocence, and other rational Considerations will make them much more supportable than they would be otherwise. But tho' it's impossible to avoid the Sense of Pain, yet the Affliction would be less frequent, and more gentle, were it not brought upon us by ill Management, and heighten'd by the Disorder of our Passions. And without Question a great part of those bodily Inconveniencies which Men suffer, either from Sickness, sudden Rencounters, or the Punishment of the Laws, may be charg'd upon envious, intemperate, or covetous Desires ; upon ambitious, or cholerick Heats. But besides that the Passions make the Body much more troublesome than it would be, they are likewise very prejudicial to the Mind, upon the Account of their ungovernable and tumultuous Nature ;

Nature ; by their Suddenness preventing, or by their Violence over-bearing the Powers of Reason ; which, besides the immediate Disorder it produces, is usually attended with unhappy Consequences at a Distance. Now amongst all other Passions which disquiet the Mind of Man, as there is none of so universal a Jurisdiction, (few or none being exempted wholly from Anger, which cannot be said of Love, Covetousness, Ambition, and several other Passions) so there is none more follow'd with such tragical Effects, and does so much Mischief in the World, as Anger doth ; insomuch that some wise Men among the Heathens utterly despair'd of governing this Passion, and therefore their Advice was, that People should do their utmost totally to suppress and extinguish it : So that had these Men been exhorted to the Practice of the Text, they would have look'd upon it as a hard Saying, and wholly impracticable. In managing a Discourse therefore upon these Words, I shall,

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I. Pro-

I. Produce those Objections, which are urged against the Lawfulness of Anger.

II. I shall, by answering them, prove the Lawfulness of it, and shew when it is so.

III. I shall mention some Cases, in which it is unlawful.

IV. I shall propound some Arguments, to dissuade us from giving Way to this Passion. And

V. I shall offer some Directions to prevent the Excess of it.

I. I shall produce those Objections, which are urged against the Lawfulness of Anger.

And here the *Stoicks* will tell us, That Anger is unlawful, because of the Contrariety it bears to our rational Natures :
“ There’s nothing (say they) that more
“ distracts and baffles our Reason than
“ this Passion, throwing aside all Prudence and Circumspection, and making
“ us act by a headstrong and random Impulse ; and consequently exposing us
“ to all the Shame and Danger of a violent inconsiderate Motion. It seems
“ always

“ always to run either the wrong Way,
“ too fast, or too far, and has nothing
“ of Order, Steadiness, or Direction in
“ it : it never does any thing well, but
“ discomposes, confounds, and ruffles
“ every thing within its Reach ; and
“ therefore, to call in its Assistance, to
“ make Reason execute more vigorously,
“ is much the same Policy, as if a Man
“ should throw himself into a Fever, only
“ that he might be warm”. Nay, they
will not allow of that, which they grant
its most plausible Employment ; no, not
to be made Use of against Wickedness it
self, for this they count no better than
destroying one Vice to make Room for
another ; A Man may as well be drunk
with Temperance, and steal honestly, as
be rationally angry. Thus argue the *Sto-
icks*. But indeed, one would imagine
the Reasoning of these Men too warm
and resenting for their Subject ; they seem
to be under the Power of that Passion
which they declaim against, and endea-
vour to preach down, and to be prepos-
terously angry with Anger itself.

2. It may be objected, That Anger includes Dislike and Revenge, and therefore seems to be contrary to the Virtues of Charity and Forgiveness, which the Christian Religion requires. As to the Aversion or Dislike of one we are angry with ; if this Dislike is founded upon a real Injury, if it does not proceed to a Hatred of his Person, if it does not put us upon doing him some Mischief, nor make us refuse doing him any Good ; then the bare Disgust, upon a sufficient Provocation, is no Fault ; because it's not in our Power to be otherwise affected. Injuries and Benefits will be apprehended with a different Sense, and it's as natural for us to be displeased with the one, as pleased with the other. This sort of Aversion is no Breach of Christian Charity. But then, secondly, as to the Revenge which the angry Person desires ; if he desires it only in Order to the Restitution of the Wrong he has receiv'd, for the securing God's Honour, and Amendment of the injurious Person : In the first of these Cases, Revenge, or a Desire

Desire of Punishment is lawful ; in the two latter Cases it's commendable. It's then only unlawful, when we desire it purely or chiefly, because we know it will be painful and uneasy to the Offender ; for to delight in the Unhappiness, or Inconvenience of another, is malicious, and exactly a Devilish Pleasure.

II. I shall now proceed more directly to prove the Lawfulness of this Passion.

I. Therefore Anger is lawful, because it's natural ; it's founded in the Principles of our Being : We could not be said to love one another, or to have any Regard to Self-preservation, if we should not be something disgusted with those that we believe either design us, or have done us Harm. If other Passions have their lawful Objects, why not this ? They can pretend no stronger Foundation in Nature ; and besides they are liable to Excess, as well as this. As for example, we are allow'd to love, to hate, to hope, to desire ; why then may we not also be angry ? Since Anger is nothing but a

Complication of these Passions : since therefore they are innocent, singly consider'd, there is no Reason that the bare compounding of them should make them otherwise. The *Stoicks* therefore who condemn'd this Passion, did likewise disallow of all the rest, whose Principles, tho' not true, yet their Consequences are very rational, and they argued closely and agreeably to what they held.

2. Anger is lawful, because God himself is represented with this Passion in Holy Scripture, as *Deut.* iii. 26, and xxxi. 17. and *Psalms* lxxviii. 31, and *Dan.* ix. 16. besides many other Places in the Old Testament. Now, tho' in strict Propriety of Speech, God is not liable to Passion, because that supposes him dependent upon Things without him, and contradicts the Notion of his Perfection ; and therefore this Manner of representing God is only made Use of in Scripture in Condescension to our Capacities, the more effectually to deter us from those Things which are displeasing to him ; yet if Anger was utterly unlawful,

ful, we may be assur'd that God would never countenance it so far, as to describe himself an Example of it; for so high a Precedent would be of dangerous Consequence to misguide our Imitation.

3. Our Saviour, though he was without Sin, yet he was not without this Passion. He is said to look upon the *Pharisees with Anger for the Hardness of their Hearts*; and we have a greater Instance, when he scourged the *Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, and overthrew the Bankers Tables*. And that this was not done without an unusual Commotion of Mind, appears from the Remark the Disciples made upon it, as well as from the Manner of the Action; for upon this they remember'd it was written, that *the Zeal of thine House has eaten me up*; which argues, that our Saviour was visibly mov'd with Indignation against the prophaning of the Temple.

4. Our Saviour forbids causeless Anger, *St. Matthew v. 21.* which is a sufficient Intimation, that we may sometimes have a justifi-

a justifiable Cause to entertain it. To which we may add the Exhortation in the Text, which supposes, that we may be innocently angry in some Cases, otherwise the Apostle would not caution us to avoid sinning when we are so, but would have absolutely forbidden the Use of this Passion.

Having now prov'd the Lawfulness of Anger, I shall but just mention the Design of its being implanted in our Nature, by which the Usefulness of it will appear.

1. It supplies us (as it's design'd) with Vigour and Resolution, to resist and repel those Things which are hurtful to us. It puts the Mind and Body upon doing their utmost, and commands great Numbers of the animal Spirits to press in to its Assistance, which would never obey the Summons of cool and sedate Reason; and accordingly it's observable, that they who are transported with this Passion, are considerably stronger than they are at another time; and therefore, as in other Cases, so, in a just War especially, this
Passion

Passion is of considerable Use to animate and enable the Soldiers to take Satisfaction for former Injuries, and defend their Lives and Liberties against the Encroachment of an Enemy.

2. As this Passion makes us charge home upon Occasion, so at another time it makes us retreat from Danger sooner than otherwise we should do ; for when we believe our selves unable to resist the Harm which threaten'd us, the warm antipathetical Impression, which is Part of the Nature of Anger, puts us upon a speedy avoiding the Thing which disgusts, and consequently is a Means for providing for our Security.

3. Anger, when exercis'd upon our selves for any Vice or Indiscretion, is a good Expedient to prevent our repeating it ; for the Shame, Folly, and Danger of our former Miscarriages, when heighten'd with a passionate Resentment, works an uneasy Self-Condernation, which helps us both to keep up a just Sense of the Fault, and also makes us more cautious from relapsing, for Fear of undergoing the

the same Severity of Discipline. One Instance therefore of lawful Anger, which I am now to consider, is when we are angry with our selves for our Sins, because this Passion will give us a more full and affecting Notion of the Unreasonableness of such Practices, and consequently will encrease our Hatred and Contrition. In this Case therefore we may say with *Jonas*, tho' with more Reason, that *we do well to be angry*. Here we have often more Occasion to heighten than moderate our Indignation, for it's very seldom that Men are too severe upon themselves, Self-Love usually interposing, and preventing their being excessive in Corrections of this Nature.

2. Anger is lawful when it proceeds from a Zeal for Religion, when we see Men openly contemn God Almighty, and glory in their Shame; when they prostitute their Wit to Prophaneness, and endeavour to run down Goodness, and make it ridiculous; then if we have any Regard for Religion, we must be affected with a more than ordinary Concern,

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it being impossible for us to be unconcern'd when we hear any Thing abus'd and vilify'd which we have a great Esteem for ; no, the Force of Antipathy, and the Ferment of the Blood, were design'd to exert upon such Occasions. Thus *Moses*, though it's said he was *the meekest Man upon Earth*, was provoked into a Passion, when he understood the *Israelites* had made and worshipp'd an Idol. So *Phinehas* likewise was acted with this Passion in the Matter of *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, as we may conclude by the Suddenness and Severity of his Proceedings : Yet his Anger or Zeal (as 'tis called) was so far from being sinful, that it was acceptable to God, who promis'd to reward him with the Continuance of the Priesthood in his Family. I don't mention this as if I thought it allowable for private Christians to proceed thus far in their Zeal for God's Glory, and exercise any Act of Authority or Jurisdiction upon Offenders without a lawful Commission ; for (besides that the *Mosaick Dispensation*

Exod.
xxxii. 19.

Numb.
xxv.

tion would allow of greater Severity than Christianity) we have Reason to believe that this Zeal of *Phinehas*, and that of *Elijah* in killing the Prophets of *Baal*, were both rais'd and govern'd by an extraordinary Impulse and Direction of God's Spirit, and therefore is not to be drawn into Imitation. Zeal for Religion does not make a Man a Magistrate, the Quiet and Order of Government being not consistent with this Principle: And therefore though private Persons may, and ought to shew their Dislike of insolent Wickedness with something of Heat and Resentment; yet this is to proceed no farther than Reproof, which must be void of Bitterness, which must be so qualify'd with Prudence and Moderation, that it may appear that we retain our Charity, that we can distinguish betwixt the Person and the Vice, and that though we hate the one, we love the other.

3. Anger is lawful, when it's caus'd by any great Injury done to our Neighbour, when his Innocence is accus'd, and his Virtue blacken'd, by bold and shameless Slander

Slander and Defamation: When Orphans, Widows and Strangers, who labour and groan under any calamitous and ill-supported Circumstances; when such Persons (whom all Mankind are bound more especially to cherish and protect) are oppressed, cheated, or inhumanly insulted, such barbarous Usage is sufficient to warrant our Indignation; Yes, I may add, that a calm Indifferency is a Sign that we are for no-body but ourselves, and that the Laws of Justice, Charity, and Humanity signify nothing with us, when they are not broken to our own Disadvantage. I proceed now,

III. To shew in what Cases Anger is unlawful, which I shall do with Respect to the Object, the Occasion, the Measure, and Continuance of it.

(1.) Our Anger is unlawful, when God is the Object of it: When we are fullen and uneasy, because we think we are not sufficiently consider'd, when we murmur and repine at God's Providence, because he has not made our Persons or Condition just as we could wish them. Now such

such Behaviour as this is not only an Argument of Ingratitude for what we have receiv'd, but which is worse, it is a reproaching God's Wisdom or Goodness, as if he either misunderstood or neglected our Interest. Of this Sin we are likewise by Consequence guilty when we fret because of *Evil-doers*, and are disturb'd at the *Prosperity of the Wicked*; for this is in Effect no less than charging God with Male-Administration, as if he was partial or inadvertent in his Government of the World.

2. Our Anger is unlawful, when directed against our Parents, Governours, or those who have lawful Authority over us; for to those Persons we are to behave with Respect and Submission, because of the Protection and other Obligations we have receiv'd from them, and the Jurisdiction which God has given them over us: And therefore to quarrel, or enter into any hot Disputes with them is undutiful, and very misbecoming. Besides, Anger implies punishing, and revenging ourselves upon those we are
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are angry with ; and therefore if these are only Prerogatives of Superiors, certainly they ought not to be permitted to any, who are so far from claiming an Independency, that they cannot pretend to an Equality of Freedom : For otherwise Order and Peace would quickly be banish'd the World, if the Governours of Families and Kingdoms might be judg'd and corrected by those that are under their Jurisdiction. And for the same Reason neither ought we to be angry with our Friends and Benefactors for the first or second Provocation, tho' it happens to be considerable enough to warrant some Resentment against a Stranger. Our Friend possibly has disobliged us once, but then we should consider how often he has done the contrary ; and how unreasonable it is that one Injury or two, because they came last, should over-balance, and make us forget a great many Courtesies and endearing Obligations. We should not therefore proceed to a sudden and violent Rupture with those Persons, of whose Kind-

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ness and Good-will we have been assur'd by a long and beneficial Experience ; for the Obligations of Friendship, besides their Value, are sacred, and therefore ought not to be forgotten without repeated Provocations.

3. Anger is unlawful, when it acts upon an Object which has not the Power nor Use of Reason, because all rational Anger supposes an Injury done us, either through Design, or Want of Care ; now this implies, that the Person offending has both Judgment to understand, and Will to displease, as also Freedom and Choice to decline and avoid it. From whence it follows, that to be angry with Infants, Fools and Madmen, is unjustifiable, because they have not the Use of their Understandings ; and therefore can have no Notion of an Injury, but are acted like Brute Beasts by the Impulse of Sense, and the Laws of their Constitution : And as for Madmen, they ought to move our Pity, and not our Passion. But to be disorder'd at the Actions of Infants and Innocents, is a Sign that we

want that Discretion our selves which we unreasonably expect in others: But some are so waspish, that they will be angry with their Cattle to that Degree, that one would almost imagine the greatest Difference between them was Shape and Noise. Some again quarrel with the Tools they work with; and others fall out with the Posts they have indiscretely run against, or the Blocks they have tumbled over. Now this seems more unreasonable than the former, because one would think the Sight of these Things might sufficiently convince them of the Absurdity of their Passion; for at this Rate Men might as well copy *Xerxes's* Madness, and be angry with the raging Sea, or the boisterous *North* Wind: And no doubt but they who have no more Temper than this comes to, are like enough to run out into such ridiculous, into such unpardonable Frenzy.

(2.) We will consider the Unlawfulness of Anger in respect of the Occasion: And,

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1. When we are angry without a Cause. I don't mean when we have no Manner of Pretence (for every one has something to pretend) but we are then angry without a Cause, when we are vainly and unaccountably provok'd, without rational Ground for being so: As for Example, if a Man should be angry, because another does not approve of every Thing which he does, because another does not conceive a Notion so soon as he would have him, or happens to contradict him in Things of little or no Concern; as if all People were bound to have Understandings just of his Size, and could apprehend and believe what they had a Mind to: Nay, some are so nice, as to be disgusted at the least Non-Conformity of Palate or Inclination. If their Friend happens not to like the same Recreation, or relish the same Dish which they do, they are apt to be out of Humour. They may as well be angry, because he is not of the same Stature and Complexion with themselves; the altering the one lying oftentimes as much
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out of a Man's Power as the other. Now this forward Temper is inconsistent with Charity and Friendship : This is disturbing ourselves and others, and spoiling all Correspondence and Conversation, without any colourable Provocation ; and therefore this we may be sure is condemn'd by our Saviour, under the Notion of causeless Anger. But, setting aside Mat. v. 21. the Disturbances it creates, and waving our Saviour's Sentence against it, the very Unreasonableness of it is sufficient to prove it unlawful ; for without Question it's a Sin to do a senseless Action, because it's an Abuse of that Reason which God has given us, or at least, of his Design in giving it ; for our refusing to employ and improve it is, at the best, no better than *hiding our Lord's Money in a Napkin*, for which we know we are to be accountable.

2. Anger is unlawful in Respect of the Occasion, when it is discharged against small Faults ; when we are ruffled and discompos'd at petty Injuries, perhaps, because a harsh and disobliging Word has

dropp'd from another, through Fear or Indiscretion; possibly our Commands are not obey'd in every Punctilio, nor our Desires exactly answer'd as we had Reason to expect; but thus to kindle at every Spark is the Way to be always in a Flame, and to make a Hell of our own Minds. We ought to consider, that we don't converse with Angels, nor can we, as yet, hope for Communion with the *Spirits of just Men made perfect*; but with Men who are ignorant, prejudicate, and partial, diseased often times both in Body and Mind; and therefore we should not think it strange, if we meet with Indiscretions, Omissions, Disappointments, and Contradictions from them: Mortals will do these Things, and as long as they differ (which they always will do) in their Understandings, Educations, Conditions, Interests, and Constitutions; so long, I say, it's impossible they should please one another in every Thing: So that he who expects Exactness in human Society, is ridiculously, and unreasonably nice, and neither considers others, nor yet

yet himself. I say, he does not consider himself; for if he did, he would find that he had some Humours to be born with and Infirmities to be conniv'd at, and that his own Actions were not so exact and unexceptionable, but that they sometime stood in Need of Allowance and favourable Construction. We ought therefore gently to pass over and dissemble light Offences, without taking any Notice of them; to which not only Charity to others, but to our selves obliges us: For as it's most reasonable to give the same Allowance which we desire to receive, so in such Cases as these we cannot be displeased with others, without condemning our selves.

3. We are to blame, when we are angry with others for those Things which are out of their Power to help; when they disappointed our Expectation, and miscarry'd in our Affairs, merely by some unforeseen and unavoidable Accident. To receive Damage by such necessary and invincible Causes ought to be reckon'd a Misfortune, and not a Crime in him

that does it ; and it's most unreasonable to be angry at it.

4. Our Anger is unlawful, when Covetousness is the Occasion of it, (*ex gr.* When Men fall out with those of their own Trade and Profession, because they hinder each other from engrossing the Advantage of their respective Employments.) The Commonness of Feuds of this Nature is not more easy to be observ'd than the Unreasonableness of them : For when my Neighbour is supported with the same Privileges of Law and Reason with myself, I ought not to be displeased with him for making an honest Use of them, which is very just in itself ; and if it were otherwise it would be a Condemnation of my own Actions. But further, those are much of the same sort of People, tho' they look something worse, who take it ill when their Neighbours won't let them encroach upon them without Opposition. If a Man be so uncivil, as to endeavour to defend his Right, and not be tamely cheated by them ; this makes them fret and fume, as if they

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suffer'd some great Injury, and had Reason to be mightily disobliged. But none are observ'd to be so much out of Humour when they are cross'd in any other Usurpation, as when they are not permitted to invade the Rights of the Church, though they are confirmed by the same Common and Statute Laws by which all other Persons hold their Estates; not to mention the Property which God Almighty has in them, by their being solemnly dedicated to his Honour and Service; and the great Usefulness of them, to secure every Man in his respective Possessions, which without Religion is impossible to be done. But notwithstanding the Property of every particular Person is founded in the Being of a Church, and supported by it; notwithstanding she hath the same Laws to plead with the best Pretenders whatsoever; notwithstanding God has declar'd himself interested in Possessions of this Nature, and that the injuring of them is *robbing himself*, yet notwithstanding Mal. iii 9. all this, if a Man will not sit still, and

and suffer the Right of the Church to be betray'd thro' Negligence or Connivance, *i. e.* if he won't suffer himself and his Successors, and God himself to be defrauded; if he won't let those who are under his Care and Charge ruin themselves without telling them on't, or endeavouring to hinder them in their sacrilegious Usurpations; if a Clergyman won't be silent and passive under such Usage, some are apt to cry out, that he is a worldly Man, and a contentious Person, and play their Satyr and Passion upon him. But if People will be satisfy'd upon no other Terms than these; if the Ministers of God who attend upon his Altar, must sacrifice not only their Interest but their Duty too, to purchase some Mens good liking, and to avoid their unreasonable Anger, then, as the Apostle says, to those that are *filthy let them be filthy still*: So to those that are thus angry, it may be said, let them be angry still; for if we *please Men* at this Rate, we may say with St. Paul, that we are not the *Servants of Christ*.

5. Anger

5. Anger is unlawful, when it proceeds from Envy, when we are troubled at our Neighbour's Prosperity, and count it a Grievance to our selves; which makes us apt, upon the least Occasion, to discharge our malicious Choler upon him. Now this is a Sign that we are acted by narrow and wretched Principles, and that we neither love God nor Man; otherwise we should not be disturb'd so much at the Goodness of the one, and the Happiness of the other.

6. Anger is unlawful, when it's caused by Self-Conceit, when we calculate by false Measures, and over-rate our own Condition, our Endowments and Performances. Then if others happen to be wiser than our selves, if they refuse to answer all our extravagant Expectations, and flatter us in all our groundless Fancies; this we shall be sure to account a great Injury to our Worth, and be often hurry'd into hot and unbecoming Resentments.

Lastly, Our Anger is blameable, when it arises from want of Care and due Respect; for this commonly proceeds from
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Contempt of others, and therefore is nearly related to that I last mentioned; whereas, had we that due Regard and Esteem for all Persons, which Reason and Christianity suggests, this would set a Guard upon our Passion, and make us cautious and inoffensive. It's plain therefore, that when we break out into frequent and unprovoked Frowardness, this waspish Temper is often the Effect of a low and injurious Opinion we have of those we converse with; and that we think them so inconsiderable that it's no Matter how we behave towards them.

(3.) I shall now proceed to shew the Unlawfulness of it, in Respect of its Measure and Continuance.

I. Anger is unlawful, in Respect of the Continuance, when it remains after Satisfaction or Submission offer'd: For when Satisfaction is made, then our Neighbour has really done us no Harm, and consequently the just Reason of our Anger and Displeasure is quite taken away; therefore if we are not perfectly reconciled to him, our Anger must be causeless,
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and consequently sinful. The same may be said, when we are angry after a reasonable Submission offer'd us; for this is an Argument that the offending Person is sorry for what he has done, and is willing to make a full Restitution, if he was able, and since he is not, he is willing to make an humble and dishonourable Acknowledgment of his Fault. Now this Acknowledgment being a sufficient Cause to oblige us to forgive him, as appears, St. *Luke* xvii. 34, &c. it must consequently oblige us to lay down our Anger; for he that is angry with another cannot be said to forgive him, because Anger supposes that we are displeased with another, and are under an actual Sense of an Injury; whereas Forgiveness on the contrary does imply a full Satisfaction made by our Neighbour, whereupon we have granted him a voluntary Remission of his Fault, and have taken away the Cause of our own Displeasure. This makes us look upon him not as an Offender, or an Adversary, but under the Notion of a Friend; and therefore we cannot

cannot be angry with him, if our Forgiveness is real; and if it is not, we have no Reason to expect that God should forgive us.

2. Our Anger is unlawful, when it remains after the injurious Person has been legally punish'd, because in this Case the Law looks upon him as an innocent Person; and therefore we have no Reason to be displeased with him: When we are angry after the Offender has sufficiently suffer'd in the Sense of the publick Magistrate, this is a Sign that our Passion has got the upper Hand of us, that it is unreasonably vindictive in desiring to punish twice for the same Fault; which is an Argment, that we wish the Harm more than the Amendment of the Offender; and consequently that our Anger is infected with Malice and personal Hatred, which makes us forget those Ends of Charity and Justice which are the only warrantable Motives of it.

3. Our Anger is unlawful, when it continues upon us at the Time of our Devotion, because then especially our
Minds

Minds ought to be quiet and compos'd, otherwise we cannot perform our Duty with that Fervency and Attention which the Majesty of him we address, and the Nature of our Requests require from us. Besides, we are taught to expect Forgiveness upon no other Terms than the forgiving others: Therefore, except we are kindly and reconcilably disposed towards our Neighbour, we cannot expect that our Prayers should be accepted. This is supposed to be the Reason why the Apostle bids us, not to *let the Sun go down upon our Wrath*; because the inward Disturbance which this Passion brings along with it will indispose us for the Performance of our Evening Devotions.

What has been said in these three Cases concerning the Excessiveness of Anger in Relation to its Continuance, will likewise prove it unlawful in Respect of its Measure; for had it been kept within due Bounds, it would never have made so durable an Impression upon our Minds; had it not been too violent it would never have supported it self by pure Disaffection

fection and Revenge, nor have stay'd with us, in Opposition to our Reason and Duty.

IV. I shall proceed now in the next Place to propound some Arguments to dissuade us from giving Way to this Passion.

I. Because it's very difficultly manageable. Other Passions make their Approaches by Degrees, and so giving us Notice of their coming, we have thereby an Opportunity of checking them before they grow too powerful: Love, Hatred and Desire, precisely consider'd, are not immediately at their highest Pitch; these Passions usually improve under Thought and Reflection; their Objects must be made familiar to the Mind by frequent Representation before they grow to any considerable Obstinacy: But Anger, on the contrary, is often perceiv'd to be in its full Strength, when first born. 'Tis a Tempest at the first Blast, and like Gunpowder discharges its Fury all together. And as it's more sudden, so it's more violent, being attended with an unusual Commotion of the Blood and Spirits. The Reason of this is because Choler is compounded

compounded of several Passions; and those, some of them, the most vigorous; for Anger does imply a Dislike of something we conceive hurtful to us, and a Desire of repelling it from doing any farther Mischief, together with a Resolution of executing our Design. Now, the Desire of throwing off that which we conceive will annoy us, is the most forcible Passion, because it's immediately founded in Self-preservation, which is the most powerful Principle. Accordingly, when an Object of Anger is presented to the Mind, the Body is immediately put into a Posture of Defence, the Spirits are drawn out upon Duty, and posted in those Parts, which are fram'd for Resistance; and, as it happens in a Country which is made the Seat of War, all Things are transacted with greater Alarms, Noise and Concern than ordinary.

Since therefore this Passion naturally acts with such an unexpected and surprising Violence, it must consequently be very difficult to manage; and therefore, as we should not admit it, but upon very

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great Motives, so likewise we ought to take Care to check and restrain it, for otherwise it will soon grow too strong for Government, and subdue our Reason, which it was design'd to assist.

2. A Proneness to Anger argues a Weakness of Mind ; for notwithstanding it seems to proceed from a Consciousness of injured and neglected Worth, and by the Noise and Bluster it makes would persuade us, that there was some brave and magnanimous Quality in it ; yet if we examine it, we shall find a Storm every whit as heroick as this Passion, that all this Swelling is more Tympany than Greatness, a Disease rather than any natural extraordinary Growth of the Mind. The Quickness of this passion resembles the Motion of Children and decrepit Persons, who run when they should go, which proceeds not from Strength and Vigour but Infirmary. And as it is an Argument of a tender unhealthy Constitution, not to be able to endure the fresh Air, without Inconvenience, and to be put into Disorder by every little Acci-

Accident ; so to be disquieted upon every petty Occasion, because every thing is not spoken or acted according as a nice and undiscerning Fancy expects, is a Sign of a distempered Mind, which is hurt with the least Touch, and wounded with the Shadow of an Injury : A Mind which has no proper Strength of its own to support its Quiet and Happiness, but depends upon the uncertain Deportment of others. And accordingly we find by Experience, that Children, sick, discontented, and very aged Persons, *i. e.* the weak, disorder'd, and decay'd Part of Mortals are most subject to this Passion : And as an Inclineness to this Passion argues Weakness in us, so if we indulge our selves in it, it will make us still weaker ; for Providence has so framed our Bodies, and made the Laws of its Union with the Soul such, that as soon as our Thoughts have any passionate Disgust, the Blood and Spirits are immediately up in Arms, that we may be the better prepar'd to encounter that which threatens to annoy us. But then God commands us never to sum-

mon in this Assistance, without very good Reason ; for the Commotion of the Blood is naturally joyn'd with our Apprehension of an Injury ; and therefore, whether the Grounds of this Apprehension are justifiable or not, the Commotion will follow. For God has given us Reason to manage this Passion, according to his Design in giving it ; which if we don't do, we shall quickly be sensible of the Inconvenience of such Neglect, or Abuse. Therefore, if we give false Alarms, and mistake our Friends for our Enemies ; if we unreasonably multiply the Causes of our Anger, and are disturb'd upon trifling Occasions, at this rate, we shall have our Bodies almost always in an Uproar. For whenever Occasions of Dislike return, it will not then be in the Power of the Mind to command the Motions of the Body, but the Blood will immediately boil up, and the whole Frame of Nature within us will be put into a Combustion. This, considering the necessary, accidental, or design'd Crossness of Things and Persons, which we shall meet with, will give us almost an universal Antipathy

ripathy to them, and make us startle and chafe at every thing we see or hear ; at every thing which is not exactly compliant with the Niceness and Extravagancy of our Humour. Now this must be a very uneasy Temper, which may be a

Third Argument to dissuade us from it.

Now, what can be more troublesome, than to be shaken with every Wind, and have the Harmony of our Mind untun'd by the least jarring Accident, to have our Peace and Tranquillity lye at the Mercy, not only of those, who are peevishly and maliciously disobliging, but to be disturb'd at the necessary Incompliance of things, at the Disappointment of unreasonable and groundless Expectations, at our Misunderstanding of the Actions of our Friends, and at the unfortunate Slips of the Innocent and Well-meaning. At this rate, the Mind must be almost perpetually forc, and making the Body, as it were, a Scene of Meteors ; apt every Moment, to be shaken and harrafs'd with Storms and Tempests ; with Thunder and Earthquakes within, and round about it.

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Fourthly, This Passion, when 'tis excessive in its Measures, or in respect of its Causes makes us act unjustly. 'Tis common to observe that angry Persons are enraged by that which ought to appease them; for let the Person they are angry with make a just Defence of himself, and shew the Unreasonableness of their Choler, this often incenses them beyond Measure: They endeavour to conceal the Folly and divert the Shame of their Passion, by being so furiously zealous in the Justification of it; they hope to supply their Want of Equity by Rage and Clamour; and to persuade others, that where there is so much Vehemence and Concern, there must be some great Provocation to cause it, and that a Man would never make so great a Stir for nothing. Another Instance of the Injustice of this Passion is, that it will be a Judge and Party too. Now this is not fair, for a Man to pretend to, at any time; much less at this time. For then 'tis odds if the Mind be not so clouded as not to discern the Justice of its Adversary's Cause,
or

or else so overway'd by Disaffection, as not to make a proportionable Allowance. But notwithstanding the Unreasonableness of this Procedure, an angry Person will hear no body but himself ; he is impatient of Contradiction, and takes every one for his Enemy, that opposes his Opinion. And as this Passion won't endure Opposition ; so, sometimes 'tis so unrighteous, as to be provok'd, because it finds none. Some angry People, when they meet with a patient and unconcern'd Silence, are often not a little exasperated : This they either interpret as an Argument of their being contemn'd, or else they are vexed to find their Rage so impotent and unsuccessful, as not to be able to do any Execution upon their Neighbour's Quiet ; they are sorry to find his Mind so secure and impregnable against all their malicious Assaults, and 'tis a Disturbance to them, to find that they are unable to disturb others.

A *Fifth* Argument against this Passion, is the Indecency of it. What wild Discomposure it causes in those who are un-

der its Power, is easy to observe. What a furious and ill-natur'd Air does it paint the Face with? The Eyes are flaming out in Revenge; the Voice loud and boisterous, like a Storm; the Joints tremble by the tumultuous Motion of the Spirits; and when the Course of Nature is thus set on Fire, the tongue, that unruly Member, will be sure to put in for its Share of Extravagancy, and speak proud and foolish Things: And thus with a blind and undistinguishing Rage, their Passion falls foul upon every thing, that comes in its Way, making no difference oftentimes between Friends and Enemies, between Things Sacred and Profane; confounding all Distinctions of Times and Persons, forgetting all Obligations, neither *fearing God, nor regarding Men*, which proves it unjust, as well as indecent. In short, this Passion, when 'tis not under the Check of Reason, is a lively Representation of a most accomplish'd Madness: The Deformity of it, if truly considered, would be a sufficient Preservative against it. A Man that deliberates upon the
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Issue, can't be guilty of an Action so unbecoming the Sense and Gravity of his kind, nor make himself so ill a Sight upon any Provocation whatsoever: He well knows that such a furious and ridiculous Behaviour is often a greater Injury than that which was the Cause of it, and does more effectually expose and lessen him in the Judgment of wise Men, than the Malice of his greatest Enemy could possibly do.

A *Sixth* Argument to dissuade us from Anger, may be drawn from the Danger of it. Now, we cannot name any thing which has done so much Mischief in the World as this Passion. What Ruine and Desolation of Countries? How many Cities have been laid in Ashes by this Wild-fire? When it gets into crowned Heads and sceptered Hands, it ravages far and near: For weak Minds and powerful Fortunes, which are too often joined together, make its Fury irresistible: And though when it possesses private Persons, it has not so large a Compass to swagger in, yet it often acts to the Extent

tent of its Power, and makes Men do as much Mischief as they are able. To Revenge they will make their Way, tho' it be thro' all the most scandalous and detestable Actions imaginable: Neither Defamation, Treachery, nor Murder it self, can sometimes stop them from saying and doing those Things on the sudden, which may encumber their whole Life with uneasy and calamitous Consequences; some of which they are sometimes quickly sensible of, for the furious Desire of Revenge is apt to destroy its own Design. The Mind is so strongly possess'd with offensive Imaginations, that it has no Leisure to consult its own Security; so that a Man in such Disorder must needs be very much expos'd, and give a wary and considerate Adversary great Advantages against him; at best, falling on with a blind sort of Violence, 'tis odds that he hurries himself over the Precipice, whilst he thinks to crush another. However, the most successful Outrages of this Nature do procure a Man the more Enemies, if maintain'd, and if not, they make the
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the Restitution and Regret for the Injury much more expensive and troublesome.

7. This Passion indisposes us for the heavenly Life : The Disposition of the Saints above is peaceable and benevolent ; they always wish well to, and are pleased with others as well as themselves, and were they otherwise affected it's not possible to conceive how they should be happy. And if we expect to arrive at their Happiness we must conform to their Temper : If we have any Aim at those blessed Mansions above ; if we desire to cohabit with those peaceful Spirits ; with that agreeable and inoffensive Company, we must qualify and prepare our selves with those Virtues which make it such ; we must compose our Minds into a Suitableness with those calm Regions, by the Exercise of Meekness and Charity, being difficultly provok'd, and easily reconcil'd ; whereas, if our Dispositions are froward and tumultuous ; if we are frequently and immoderately ruffled with revengeful Thoughts, this indisposes us for the Offices

fices of Religion, and deprives us of the Influences of God's Holy Spirit. For he who is the *God of Peace* will never vouchsafe his Presence to those whose Minds are often in Disorder and Confusion, who love to disturb the Quiet of others, tho' it be with the Loss of their own. The Kingdom of God, St. *Paul* tells us, consists in *Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, i. e.* in a quiet and benevolent Disposition towards Men, and in a chearful Dependence upon Providence: Therefore, when we go off with habitual Passion into the other World, if our Minds have been frequently discompos'd, and settled into Crossness and Turbulency, we are then only fit for the Society of those discontented and furious Spirits, concerning whom Anger may be said to be both their Nature and their Punishment: For as they delight in nothing so much as in working the Disturbance and Misery of others, so the Disappointment or Baseness of the Attempt will cause such an uneasy Reflection, which will overbalance all the malicious Pleasure, all the

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Satisfaction which arises either from the Contrivance or Success of it.

Having now shewn the Inconveniences in giving Way to this Passion, and of what ill Consequence the Excesses of it are, I shall proceed, in the third Place, to offer some Directions in order to the preventing it.

I. Therefore we ought to avoid Self-Conceit. When we consider that God has made *all Nations of one Blood*, and Acts xvii. distributed the most valuable Privileges of human Nature to all in common, that no Man might have any just Occasion to insult another; and as for those accidental Advantages of Understanding, Body, or Fortune, when we consider that these are likewise the Gifts of Providence, we shall find that they are given us not to make any supercilious Comparison with those who want them, but to dispose us to be more thankful to our Benefactor, and useful to others; especially we should be careful not to take the Height of our selves from any thing that's trifling and unreasonable at the
Bottom.

Bottom. For though this be nothing but a Bubble blown by a mistaken Imagination, yet it swells the Man as much, and makes him look as big as if all this Bulkiness was really natural and sound. Now, when we have made such a glorious, but yet deceitful Representation of our selves, (though it be a *mere Idol*, that is, nothing in Nature, as the Apostle speaks) yet if all People don't worship the golden Image which we have set up we are apt with *Nebuchadnezzar*, to have *the Visage of our Countenance changed*, and to be disobliged with all that won't flatter us. Such an overweening Opinion of our own Worth will make our Anger both causeless and excessive; for the Desert and Excellency of the Person injured is always a just Aggravation of the Injury, and therefore where the former are over-rated, the latter must be necessarily so too. The Way therefore to be free from the Disorders of this Passion, is to entertain just and modest Notions of our own Qualifications; and as the Apostle commands
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us, to *think soberly of our selves as we ought to think.*

2. We must not be easy and sudden in believing Reports. We ought to consider, that Slander, tho' it's none of the least, yet it's one of the most common Sins, infomuch that sometimes we may observe, that those who are very conscientious in other Respects, fail in this Point, without so much as taking Notice of it, relating Things prejudicial to others, of which they have no certain Knowledge, tho' if they had, many times it would not excuse them. However, the Pleasure of telling something that's new makes them venture upon it. Others tell Stories of their Neighbours, and either through Ignorance or Forgetfulness omit the most material and excusing Circumstances; which must needs represent an Action quite different from what it is, and make that appear worthy of Blame which is not only innocent, but commendable. A third sort defame others either out of Principles of Interest, because they hope to get something by it,

or out of Malice, because of a devilish Pleasure they take in doing Mischief, and in setting People at Variance and Enmity one with another. Seeing therefore Misrepresentation of Things, making them worse than they are, is so common, either upon the Account of the Ignorance, Indiscretion, or Design of the Relators, it must be very imprudent, as well as unjust, to credit any Accusation or Report before we have fairly examined the Truth of it. For at this Rate, one or other will disoblige us almost perpetually. When we are told, that our Neighbour has done us an Injury, we should stop a-while, and suspend our Belief, and not be hasty in concluding the Truth of the Relation; for to be over-credulous in this Case, is a bad Sign of an uncharitable and malicious Temper, and that we wish Things as ill as they are reported. We should consider, that to be angry with another at a Venture, before we have examined the Competency and Integrity of the Informers, before we have given the accused Party Notice of what he is charged with,

with, is a very unkind and unreasonable Procedure; it's condemning a Man upon Suspicion, without allowing him the just Freedom of alledging what he has to say in his own Defence. Now, if People would observe this Caution, and not believe that their Neighbour has done them any Injury, till they have certain Ground for their Persuasion, they would then prevent a great deal of causeless Anger, and would be much seldomer troublesome to themselves and others than they are.

A third Expedient to prevent unlawful Anger is, to put the best Construction upon the Words, Gestures, and Actions of others. It's the Saying of a very wise Man, That every Thing has two Handles, *i. e.* as there is nothing so good, which an envious, designing, and censorious Person may not lessen and abuse; so there's nothing so ill, as not to have some excusing extenuating Circumstances, provided we would take the Pains to find them out. Now, that we are bound to take every Thing in the best Sense is plain, because otherwise we charge our Neighbour with

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that which possibly he is not guilty of; and to condemn without Evidence, we know is a very unrighteous way of proceeding. Besides, if we desire that others should make the fairest Interpretation of our Actions, then, by the Rule of doing as we would be done by, we ought to afford them the same Measure. Now, if we had but this generous Principle of Justice and Charity in us, we should fasten upon something in almost all Persons and Actions, to abate a real, or excuse a seeming Injury; for if the disobliging Person was young, we should impute it to the Rashness and Inadvertency of that Age; if he were old, the Decays and Infirmities of Nature ought to have some Allowance. Are we disgusted by a wise Man? we should then think that he has some Reason for what he does, which we don't comprehend. On the other Side, does he want Understanding? we should then pity his Ignorance. Is he afflicted with Poverty or Sicknes? we should then consider that the Uneasiness of his Circumstances may make him act unreasonably.

Is he rich? possibly he has been under ill Hands, and been flatter'd into a wrong Opinion of himself; and therefore we should have some Compassion upon the Account of the false Notions he has entertain'd. Are they Parents or Governours which provoke us? The Sense of the Obligations we have received from them, and their Authority ought to restrain our Passion. Are they our Friends, which have done or said any thing we don't like? we should then imagine, that possibly their Care of us, or the Laws of Familiarity has made them take this Freedom. Thus if we would study to put the fairest Sense upon the Actions of others, this would prove an excellent Means to free us from the disquieting Sense of an Injury, and from saying and doing any thing which may be of ill Consequence to our selves or others.

4. We ought to endeavour after Generosity of Mind. Now the way to acquire this is to consider, that nothing is properly our own, except the Government of our own Wills; and that in Re-

ality we are to be commended or discommended for nothing but the right Use or Misemployment of this Freedom. Now when a Man, thus persuaded, finds in himself a sincere and steady Resolution of doing that always, which his Conscience is assured ought to be done; this makes him have a just Esteem of himself, and not depend upon the uncertain Humour of others for his Satisfaction; this makes him reckon nothing valuable but what is in his own Power. This Opinion, together with a suitable Practice, as it's the greatest Privilege of human Nature, so it lies within the Power of all Persons, of what Rank or Condition soever. For every one by God's Assistance may make a right Use of his Reason if he will, and he that is conscious to himself that he has done thus, as to the main, knows that he is growing up to the Perfection of his Kind; this generous Sense will raise him above the Reach of Injury and Contempt, so that with a brave and unconcerned Superiority of Mind he will be able

able to trample upon the ill-designed Folly and Indiscretion of others.

5. We should guard with Resolution against this Passion when we converse with those who are likely to provoke us to it. Some Persons are so disagreeable and perverse, of such sour and morose Dispositions, that if a Man be not aware of them, it's odds if he is not surpris'd into some passionate Resentment of their Carriage; but he that expects to be thus accosted by them, and resolves to take no Notice of it, is for the most Part sufficiently fortify'd, especially if he carefully examines himself upon what Account he is most likely to be exasperated; and then, according as the Observation of his Temper directs him, fortifies those Places, with proper Considerations, where this Passion is most likely to assault and overcome.

6. In order to the preventing this Passion, we must take Care not to be immoderate in our Affections towards any worldly Enjoyment; for if others happen to stand in competition with us for the

same Things, or accidentally deprive us of them, this will prove no ordinary Provocation; for Anger is often nothing but disappointed Desire, and therefore we can't chuse but be highly displeased with those Persons, whom we look upon as the great Hindrances of our Happiness. But if we are moderate and cool in our Affections to Things here, and shew our selves to be true Christians, in Imitation of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, who reckoned all Things of this World to be but *Dross and Dung*; then we shall certainly count the Loss of them no considerable Disappointment, and consequently be the less inclinable to be disturbed at the Causes of it. Thus, for Instance, he that believes *a Man's Life does not consist in the Abundance of the Things he possesses*, won't be disturbed to see another thrive better than himself; he won't love his Neighbour the less, for being more successful in his Undertakings, nor break Friendship with any, because they have gain'd an advantageous Post from him, provided the Competition

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was fairly managed; so he that does not let his Satisfaction depend on common Fame and popular Applause, won't be discompos'd when he hears himself misrepresented, nor grow impatient at every Neglect or Omission he meets with: He knows that the Considerableness of any Person lies in the Nature and Quality of his Actions, and not in the Opinion of others; that a Man's Worth is ne'er the less valuable for not being taken Notice of. In short, he that seriously reflects how unnecessary and unsatisfactory those Things are which are admir'd, will find that they are too inconsiderable to create a Scuffle, or be concern'd for. Indeed, could our Reason, the Immortality of our Being, and the Hope of eternal Happiness be taken from us, we had the justest Cause imaginable to be angry with those that should injure us in so great a Concern: But since those Privileges are secure against all but our selves, there is scarce any thing else which is great enough to excite the Desire, much less to deserve the Passion of a wise Man. This World

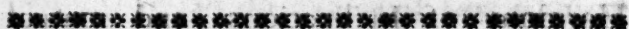
therefore being so insignificant, it's seldom worth our while to disturb our selves and our Neighbours about it; and when we are so successful as to get the Mastery over this Passion, we shall be sensible, that the Advantage of such a Conquest will largely requite the Trouble of gaining it. For must it not be a great Satisfaction to have our Minds sedate and compos'd; to be Proof against the Injury and Folly of others, and free from the Torment of envious and revengeful Thoughts, which though they are not the necessary Effects of Anger, yet they are the frequent Improvements of it? He that has the Command of this Passion will have his Reason more clear and undisturb'd, to discern the Difference, and examine the Weight of Things: He is in a better Capacity, both to foresee an Evil and to prevent it; his Judgment will be more correct, his Security better provided for, and his Actions more graceful and obliging. In short, his Ease, his Interest and Reputation would be most effectually provided for this Way; I may add,

add, his Health too, for Spleen and Peevishness sour the Blood, and prey upon the Spirits, and like *Aqua fortis*, would fret almost an Iron Constitution in Pieces.

In the last Place, an Evenness and Sweetness of Temper will prepare us for those peaceful Regions, where there are no Jarrs, nor Animosities, no passionate Resentments, nothing that is morose and disobliging; where good Understanding, Harmony of Inclinations, and mutual Endearments, are the everlasting Blessings and Ornaments of that Society. Those generous Spirits delight in their being acceptable, as well as in any other Advantages of their Condition; and it's a Pleasure to every one to be able to please and entertain another. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the Merits, &c.



SERMON VII.



St. LUKE iv. 8.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.



THAT the Devil, as St. Ignatius observes, was ignorant of our Saviour's Incarnation, seems evident from the former Part of this Chapter: For if he had known him to be the eternal Son of God, he would
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not have been so impolitick, and possibly not so bold as to have tempted his Maker. 'Tis plain from the Nature of the Temptations, that the Devil took our Saviour for no more than some extraordinary Prophet sent to reform the World; and therefore he resolves to try if he could pervert him before he could accomplish his Design. He well remember'd how successful he had been in Paradise, how he had seduced our first Parents in their best Condition; before there was any Guilt, before there was any Weakness upon humane Nature; he had therefore the less Reason to question prevailing over their lapsed Posterity: And like one well practis'd in Deceit, he reserves his Master Stratagem for the last. He knew, the most generous, and best fortify'd Minds, who are Proof against other Vices, are often found weak upon the side of Ambition. And therefore, being baffled in his two former Attempts, he throws out the Baits of Power and Greatness; and to make them the more inviting, he presents a Scheme as rich as Imagination

gination could paint it, draws all the Pomp and Splendor of the World into one Prospect, and *shews our Saviour all the Kingdoms of the Earth in a Moment of Time.* And when he thought his Senses were dazled, and his Mind charmed with the glorious Representation; he makes a Proffer of the whole, and demands nothing but Homage and Acknowledgment for it: *If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine.* And here our blessed Saviour was neither pleased to discover himself, nor yet to make any exceptions against the Tempter. He does not tell him he was an Apostate Spirit, and therefore ought not to pretend to worship, nor how infinitely he had been his Inferior had he stood in his Integrity. He does not object, that he usurped the Person and Character of the supreme God; for this the Devil did not do; he boasted indeed that the World was at his Disposal, but then it was not in his own Right, it was only *delivered to him.* Now this is a plain Acknowledgment of a higher Power: And that the Tempter pretended

pretended to be no more than a ministerial Deity. Yet our Saviour refutes him under this Notion, tho' most advantageously taken; and gives him an Answer which makes it unlawful for a mere Man to worship the most glorious Angel in Heaven. He tells him, that Adoration was to be paid to none but the supreme Being, that the most excellent Creatures had no Authority to challenge such a Submission from those below them. For it is written, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, &c.*

From these Words I shall endeavour to prove that religious Worship is to be given to none but God. Which Proposition may be made good these three Ways.

I. From the Doctrine of the Scriptures.

II. From the Testimony of the Antients.

III. From the Reason of the Thing.

But before I do this it will not be improper to state the Notion of religious Worship: By which we are to understand that Worship which is given to invisible Spirits:

Spirits, to the Inhabitants of the other World, who are removed from human Converse. From whence we may observe that it's not the same thing to worship visible and invisible Angels. When an Angel presents himself to our Senses, and gives good Assurances that he comes from God, there is a great Regard without doubt due to the Superiority of his Nature, but especially to his Character, as he is God's Messenger. But this Regard, which ought to go no higher than moral Reverence, is no Warrant for a solemn Addressing our selves to them when their Embassy is over: When they are reduced to private Persons, when they are unseen and possibly out of the reach of our Application. In the next Place we may observe, that the outward Signs of civil and religious Worship are often the same, and only distinguishable by Circumstances. When we kneel to God, and to our Prince, our Posture may lawfully be the same: There is no visible Difference between our bowing at the Name of *Jesus* in Acknowledgment of our Redemption,

Redemption, and our paying a Respect to a Friend. But when these Tokens of Honour and Submission are shewn at Times and Places consecrated to Religion; when they are given at the Solemnities of divine Service; when there is Occasion for no other sort of Worship; these Circumstances of the Action determine the Nature of it, and clearly distinguish it from that Honour which we give to our Friends or Superiors.

I. I shall now proceed to the first Topic: And endeavour to prove from the Scriptures, that religious Worship is to be given to none but God.

I shall begin with the Old Testament: And here we may argue negatively from the Silence of the Scriptures. We don't find the *Israelites*, or any Holy Men in the *Jewish* Church, address their Prayers, or their Vows, or gave religious Adoration to any but God. But if the Invocation of Saints or Angels had been counted so useful a Doctrine as the Church of *Rome* teaches; if it had been Part of their Creed, as it is of Pope *Pius's*;
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if it had been the Custom of the *Jews* to apply themselves to God by the Intercession of good Spirits; we have Reason to believe we should have met with some Examples of this Nature in the Bible. But neither the Patriarchs nor Prophets, nor any other, have left us one Instance of this Nature. 'Tis true, they prayed God to remember the Covenant that he made with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, &c. but we never read that they prayed to these departed Saints to pray for them. Now, we know the *Jews* had a wonderful Veneration for their Ancestors, and valued themselves mightily upon their being the Children of *Abraham*. If therefore, they had thought it lawful to pray to their departed Ancestors, we may be assured they would not have omitted such a Respect. For 'twould have been a peculiar Honour to their Nation, to have had such powerful Intercessors with God Almighty. If the *Jewish* Church had been of the Opinion of the Council of *Trent*, That 'tis good and profitable humbly to invoke the Saints, and have recourse to their Prayers

Prayers and Assistance, we have reason to believe the *Psalms*, which are no small part of the *Jewish* Liturgy, would have afforded a great many Precedents of this kind: And we should have found *Abraham* and *Moses* called upon as often as the Blessed Virgin is in some other Places.

If 'tis objected, That the Reason we don't find the Saints invoked in the Old Testament is because they were not so well qualify'd for Mediators before our Saviour's Resurrection as they are since: For, before our Saviour had made a Propitiation for our Sins upon the Cross, and carry'd his humane Nature into Heaven, and presented his Sacrifice in the Holy of Holies; before this, the Saints were not admitted into the immediate Presence of God; they did not enjoy the beatifick Vision, but were lodged in that they call *Limbus Patrum*, where their Condition was less perfect, where they had not that Happiness, and Interest, and Knowledge of humane Affairs, which they have in Heaven.

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But waving the weak and precarious Arguments, by which they conclude the Spirits of good Men are in a higher Station since Christianity than before ; supposing, but not granting the Reality of their *Limbus*, yet have we not Reason to believe, that some extraordinary Persons had the Privilege immediately upon their Departure, of as intimate Communion with God as the Saints enjoy at present ? For is it not said, that *Enoch* Gen. v. *walked with God*, and that God took him ? And does not the same Scripture affirm in so many Words, that *Elijah* 2 Kings i. *went up by a Whirlwind into Heaven* ? Indeed if we had nothing else, the singular Way of these Persons going out of the World, would make us believe they had some extraordinary Favours in the other. Why therefore did not the *Jews* pray to *Enoch* and *Elias* ? But farther, granting their Condition was the same with the rest, yet they can't say the Angels were in *Limbo* : They can't deny, but that these Ministers of God had the same Access to him, the same Power and Prero-

Prerogatives before the Incarnation which they have since. Besides if it had been lawful, the *Jews* had particular Reasons for the worshipping of Angels, and which we may presume would have made them very inclinable to it. For was not their Law deliver'd by Angels? Did they ^{Acts vii.} not receive frequent Visits from them? Did they not bring them many acceptable Messages from Heaven? Did they not sometimes foretel Victories, and sometimes cause them, as in the case of *Gideon*, and the Destruction of *Sennacherib's* Army? Had they not a particular Revelation that God had committed the Government of the World to Angels, and assign'd them their respective Jurisdictions, as his Viceroys, as we may see in *Dan. x.* where 'tis plain that by the Princes of *Persia* and *Græcia*, are meant the Angels who had the Superintendency over those Countries? Nay, is not their particular Patron and provincial Angel mention'd, is not *Michael* call'd *their Prince*? Now since they ^{Dan. x. 13, 21.} were acquainted with his Name; since ^{xii. 1.}

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he had appeared in their Behalf; and was promised to be the Defender of their Posterity; considering this, I say, nothing but the Unlawfulness of the Action, could hinder the *Jews* from making their Application to *Michael*; how much greater Reason had they, than some modern *Christians*, to make him their Protector when they were distress'd by Pestilence, or Earthquakes, or any such Calamity? If the *Jews* had thought the Worship of Angels lawful, they were of all People that we know of, the most oblig'd to have paid them this Respect. Neither can we imagine all their holy Men would have been so regardless of their Interest, and so backward in point of Gratitude, as to have been guilty of such an Omission. 'Tis true, *Abraham* is said to bow down before the Angels; but then, this was but a civil Regard: For 'tis plain from the Context, that he took them for no more than Men. Had he believed they belonged to the other World, he was not so ignorant of their Nature as to have entertain'd them with
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a Calf. And to this Place, in all likelihood, the Author to the *Hebrews* refers; where he tells us, That some under the Notion of *Strangers*, have enter-^{Heb. xii.}
tain'd Angels unawares.^{2.}

But was not *Moses* commanded by the Angel in the Bush to *put off his shoes*, because the ground was holy? which is an Argument, he expected religious Worship: And did not *Moses* do accordingly? The same Thing was required of *Joshua*, and complied with. And there-^{Josh. v.}
fore to the first Instance, which will likewise comprehend the second, St. *Athanasius* answers expressly, ^a That God spoke in the Appearance of an Angel to *Moses* in the burning Bush. And the Fathers generally suppose, as shall be shewn afterwards, particularly *Justin Martyr*, that it was the eternal Son of God who appear'd to *Joshua* in the Person of an Angel, and prove our Saviour's Divinity from *Joshua's* adoring him. Now this would be no Argument, if they

^a Athan. Orat. IV. cont. Arian. p. 467.

Judg. xiii.
Rev. xxi

did not believe Adoration was to be given to none but God: And therefore they observe, that when mere Angels appeared, they refused Adoration; as the Angels which appeared to *Manoa* and *St. John*. But when Worship was allow'd or commanded, it was the Divine Nature under the Appearance of an Angel.

Farther, had religious Application to Angels been the Custom of the *Jews*, we may be assur'd we should have had some Notices of it conveyed down to us. If this had been Part of their Religion, can we imagine the Regulation of it would have been entirely omitted in their Law; I say, in their Law, where so many Things of much smaller Consequence are particularly related? And therefore *Origen* tells *Celsus*, That he slander'd that Nation, by saying, they worshipp'd Angels; and challenges him to produce his Proof out of the Writings of *Moses* ^b. And *Sir Edwin San-*

^b Orig. cont. Cels. l. i. p. 20. Ritual. Rom.

dys, how rightly I shall not determine, observes, That the *Roman* Catholicks Praying to Saints and Angels, is one Reason which hinders the Conversion of the *Jews* in *Italy* ^c: For they believe, that Prayer is to be made to none but God: And this, they affirm, has been the Doctrine of their Ancestors in all Ages. But besides that we have no Records to justify this Doctrine, and that the Tradition of the *Jews* condemns it: Besides this, I shall endeavour to prove, that the Scripture is not only not for it, but against it.

I shall begin with the First Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods* ^{Exod, xx. 2.} *before me*; or, as the Septuagint has it, *besides me*. Where the Meaning of having *no other Gods*, &c. is either, that thou shalt not own any other supreme Gods but my self; or else, that thou shalt confine all thy religious Service to me, and not let any created Beings have a Share in the Worship which is paid to me. That the first Sense was not chiefly

^c *Euseb. Specul.*

intended in the Command, seems plain : For, to forbid the *Israelites* owning more supreme Gods than one, was to forbid a Sin, which in all Probability, they never were guilty of, nor were ever likely to be. For two supreme Beings is a Contradiction ; and so plain a one, that the grossest Understanding can scarcely overlook it. If it be said, that the *Israelites* might own several independent Gods, tho' they did not look upon them as supreme, and the worshipping them without a due Subordination, was that which was forbidden :

To this I answer, that this is as improbable as the other : For we can't well suppose the *Israelites* to have wholly lost the Tradition of the Patriarchs which was so lately deliver'd ; the principal Part of which was, the Creation of the World by one God. And if all Things were made by one, 'tis obvious to conclude, there can be but one independent Being. Besides, why should we suppose the *Israelites* were more deprav'd in their Notions of Religion than other Nations ?

Nations? Than other Nations, who generally agreed in the Acknowledgment of a supreme God, though they worshipped others together with him? Thus the ancientest of the *Greeks* call *Jupiter* the Father of Gods and Men; and the *Romans* style him *Optimus Maximus*, the Best and Greatest: Which is a plain Intimation they believ'd there was but one Sovereign Being, and that all other Things depended on him. Nay, the *Egyptians*, who are suppos'd to have corrupted the *Israelites*, did not degenerate so far as to hold a Plurality of independent Beings, as appears from *Porphyrus*^d: *The Egyptians*, says he, *by the several Animals they worshipped*, express'd their Devotion to the Almighty Power of God. And *Apuleius*, who was initiated in the *Egyptian* Mysteries, calls *Osiris*, whom they worshipped, *Deus Deorum Magnorum Potior, & Majorum Summus, & Summorum Maximus, & Maximorum Regnator Osiris*; which are meant for

^d Porph. de Abstin. Lib. IV. §. 9.

Descriptions of no less than the supreme God *. And there is a considerable Testimony to this Purpose in *Vopiscus*, taken out of an Epistle of the Emperour *Adrian*, which he wrote to *Servianus* from *Egypt*: In this Epistle giving an Account of the Manners of the *Egyptians*, there are these Words: *They had one God, whom Christians, and Jews, and all Nations worshipped* †. To this I shall only add the Testimony of *Maximus Tyrius*, who made it his Business to view the several Religions in the World. Now, in his first Dissertation there is this Passage; “ That how much soever the several Nations of the World differ’d from each other in Customs, and Languages, and Modes of Worship, yet they all agreed in this, that there was one God, Lord and Father of all. We see, therefore, there was no Fear the Children of *Israel* should own more independent Gods than one, unless we suppose them more

* Apul. Metam. Lib. XI.

† Vopisc. in Saturnino.

stupid than the rest of the World. Now, if they believ'd but one independent God, they would be sure to worship none but him under that Notion, it being impossible for any one to have an equal Regard for Things which he does not believe to be equal; and consequently, in their inward Devotion, they would not fail to give the greatest Honour to the Supreme God; so that their Intention must of necessity be right, upon which the *Roman* Divines lay so much Stress in this Case. From whence it follows, that the Prohibition in this Commandment must extend to the external and visible Part of Religion. And thus the Meaning of the Command, must exclude all other Beings from having a Share in the Worship of the Supreme God: *Thou shalt have no other Gods, &c.* The Word is *Elohim*, which, according to its Use in Scripture, will take in good Angels, as well as the Deities of the Heathen. Thus the natural Interpretation of the Command is, that as there is one Being sovereign to all the rest, and upon whom they

they all depend, so we ought to preserve this Distinction in our Actions, and not confound Things so infinitely distant by promiscuous Signs of Honour. That we are thus to understand the Prohibition, is still more evident by God's immediately declaring himself a *Jealous God*: (Especially if, according to St. *Augustine's* Opinion, the second Commandment is only an *Appendix* to the first.) For what can we so well understand by his being a Jealous God, as that he will shew himself very sensible of any Injury done to his Honour; that he expects our Affections should not be divided between him and his Creatures; that our religious Services should be wholly devoted to him; and that he will not allow any Rivals in Adoration? And to this Purpose *Maimonides*, a learned Jew, who no doubt understood his own Religion, tells us, that if any one worshipped an Angel, a Star, or any Creature, though he did not believe it to be God, yet he was guilty of Idolatry. But if he did not believe it to be God, he could not

not inwardly give it the highest Honour : And therefore, according to him, Idolatry, though of a less criminal Kind, may be committed by giving religious Worship to a Creature. And therefore *Josephus Albus*, cited by *Vossius* §, upon *Maimonides*, was of Opinion, that the Worship of the true God was first corrupted by those who address'd themselves to Angels to intercede for them: And interprets the having *no other Gods before me*, or, *before my Face*, as it is in the Original, to this Sense ; That Men should not apply to any Mediators for procuring the Favour of the Divine Majesty " ; meaning, that if we solicited any created invisible Beings to appear *before the Face of God* for us, their interposing would, as it were, hide him from us, and deprive us of the Comfort of his Presence.

A second Place which I shall urge, is *Deut. vi. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him* ; or as the *Septuagint* (which Translation the Apostles

§ Voss. de Idololat.

and Evangelists generally follow) has it, *αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις, thou shalt serve him only*: And therefore this, as *Grotius* observes, is the Place which our Saviour quotes against the Devil in the Text: Which Words, in all Probability, relate to the fourth Verse, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord*. And therefore *Josephus* above-mention'd interprets them accordingly, That because there is but one God, he alone ought to be worshipped. Now, this Argument drawn from the Unity and incommunicable Nature of God, holds equally against all created Beings, against good Spirits as well as bad ones. 'Tis true, the Word *only* is not at length in the Original, but then 'tis imply'd in the Emphatickness of the Expression; and without doubt we may safely rely on the Authority of the *Septuagint* in this Case, since *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* have done it before us. And if farther Satisfaction was necessary, it might be had, where the Original is more full: *If, says he, ye do return unto the Lord with all your Hearts, then*

1 Sam.
vii. 3.

then put away the strange Gods and Ashteroth from among you, and prepare your Hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only. It seems, he thought their Minds could not be rightly prepar'd for the Service of the true God, as long as they worshipp'd any besides him. And here, might not the Children of *Israel*, according to some Mens Divinity, have replied upon *Samuel*, *Serve the Lord only!* That's somewhat surprizing; sure your Expression is too general and comprehensive. 'Tis true, we are willing to relinquish *Baalim* and *Ashteroth*, the Sun and Stars, and the Gods of the Nations; for though we worshipped them before in the Simplicity of our Souls, believing them good and intelligent Beings, and Ministers of the great God; yet now the ill Success of our Affairs makes us suspect they were either senseless Creatures, or revolted malicious Spirits, and therefore we are resolv'd to worship them no longer. But then, we hope, 'tis not unlawful to address those, of whose Virtue and Integrity we have sufficient Assurance.

Assurance. *Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, and our great Lawgiver *Moses*, were certainly good Men; and therefore there's no Danger of worshipping evil Spirits in them. May we not be allow'd to pay some religious Regard to our pious and worthy Ancestors, who were so famous while they liv'd here, and are now happy and reigning in Paradise? Nay, must we be barr'd making Application to the Angels, those Heavenly Messengers, who appear'd to the Patriarchs, and deliver'd the Law, and conducted our Fathers through the Wilderness, and have shewn themselves favourable to us upon so many signal Occasions? Certainly we may have the Liberty to make ourselves as acceptable to these glorious Spirits as we can. We can't imagine God should be displeas'd for our honouring these his Servants and Favourites. No, tho' we should pay them the same visible Regard done to himself; tho' we should pray to them at Times and Places set apart to his Divine Majesty; and with the same Signs of Reverence and Humility;

lity ; provided we desire them only to intercede for us, and don't look upon them as the original Givers of all Good : This, and much more might have been objected by the *Jews*, if the Worship of any middle Excellencies had been any primitive and authoriz'd Part of their Religion. We have no Reason to believe the *Israelites* deserted the Worship of the true God : For *Samuel* here tells them, *If ye will return unto the Lord with all your Heart, &c.* which is an Argument they were not wholly apostatiz'd from him ; and intimates that they would willingly have been permitted to serve the true God and the *Heathen* Idols together.

'Tis true, they are said to have forsaken God, in some Places where there is mention made of their Idolatry : But this is not to be understood as if they entirely abandon'd his Service ; but they are said to forsake him, because they did not serve him in an acceptable Way, according to his own Appointment ; because they did not make him the sole Object of their

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Worship

Ibid. xxi.
29.

Worship. That this is the Meaning, will appear if we consider, that in the Time of *Ahab*, when the Church of *Israel* was as degenerate as ever; yet then the *Israelites* did not renounce the true God, as we may learn from *Theodore**, in his Comment upon 1 *Kings*, xviii. 21. *How long will ye halt, &c.* where he tells us that *Halting* was serving God and the Idols together. Nay, 'tis plain that *Ahab* himself, of whom so ill a Character is given, own'd *Jehovah*, otherwise he would not have humbled himself under the Threatnings of the Prophet. For: 'tis not natural to regard the Message of a neglected God. The same may be collected from Chap. xxii. 16. where *Ahab* adjures *Micaiah* to tell him nothing but what was true, in the Name of the LORD. That this was the Meaning, may be proved farther from 2 *Kings* xvii. where those new Inhabitants of *Samaria*, who were sent thither by the King of *Affyria*, undoubtedly

* Theod. Quæst.

worship'd

worship'd the true God, as appears from several Places of that Chapter; particularly *ſ. 32, 33, 41*, they are ſaid to *fear the Lord*. And yet, becauſe they worſhip'd their own Deities with him, they are ſaid *not to fear the Lord*, becauſe they did not do it, *ſ. 34, 35, as the Lord commanded the Children of Jacob, who charged them not to fear other Gods.*

And 'tis likely the *Iſraelites* under *Samuel* had the ſame Notion with theſe *Samaritans*, that the more Gods they worſhip'd, the more Friends they ſhould have in Heaven; and conſequently their Security would be the greater. This Fancy, 'tis likely, made them ſerve *Baalim* and *Aſhteroth* together with the true God. Now if the Worſhip of created Spirits had been uſual, or but barely allowable; we may be pretty well aſſured, the Prophet would not have pronounced againſt it, in ſo full and categorical a Manner; nor have charged them to ſerve the Lord only: Had the Invocation of Saints and Angels been accounted lawful he would

not have denied them so innocent a Liberty, nor barred their Inclinations, nor hindred them from gaining so many powerful Intercessors. No, he would rather have directed them to good Beings, and furnish'd them with the Notions of absolute and relative Worship; and instructed them in those Distinctions which are now made use of for the same purpose. Nay, if this Practice had been so useful as the Church of *Rome* teaches, we have reason to believe it would have been encouraged among the *Jews* by their Prophets, and introduced by special Direction if they had not thought upon it themselves. For, that Nation had need enough of all proper Assistances to help their Understandings and regulate their Manners. For possibly, considering the Advantages they had, they were as dull and ungovernable a People as ever were. Their Apprehensions of a future State were very slender and obscure; and their Minds wholly fix'd upon gross and sensual Expectations. Now, their holding Correspondence with unembodied and departed Spirits, might possibly

possibly have removed this Weakness and Prejudice in some Measure. The constant Opportunity this way would give them, of reflecting how considerable their Ancestors were in the other World; that they understood the Affairs of Mortals here below, and were almost always guarding or interceding for them: Such an Expedient would have been apt to have refined their Understandings, raised their Affections above things of this Life, and given them a clearer Prospect of the other: And therefore we may imagine, this Expedient would have been recommended, had there not been more Danger in it another way. But notwithstanding all these supposed Advantages, *Samuel* tells them they must *serve the Lord only*. And which is more remarkable, the Word is *δεσποσε*; which seems plainly to overthrow the Distinction between *Latria* and *Dulia*; between absolute and inferior Worship; and proves that no religious Application is to be made to any created Being.

R. 3

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I should now proceed to consider some Places in the *New Testament*, and prosecute the remaining Parts of the Text; but of that afterwards.



SERMON



S E R M O N VII.



St. LUKE iv. 8.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.



YOU may possibly remember, that from these Words I undertook to prove that religious Worship ought to be confined to God only : And consequently that a formal and solemn Invocation of

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Saints

Saints and Angels was unlawful. Which Proposition, I told you, I should endeavour to make good,

I. From the Doctrine of the Scriptures.

II. From the Testimony of the Antients.

III. From the Reason of the Thing.

First, I argued against the Invocation of Saints and Angels from the Silence of the Scriptures: And shew'd what Reason we had to expect some Instances of this Nature upon Record, if such a Practice had been customary or allowable.

Secondly, I urg'd several express Texts, as *Exod.* xx. 2. *Deut.* vi. 13. *1 Sam.* vii. 3. to shew that we ought not to make any religious Application to any Being besides the supreme God: Where I likewise endeavour'd to prove the Vanity of the Distinction between sovereign and inferior Worship.

I shall now proceed to prove the Unlawfulness of Creature-worship from the *New Testament*; of which Doctrine the Text, if we had no other, was a sufficient Proof. For, the Reason of our Saviour's rejecting

rejecting the Temptation, is neither drawn from his own Godhead, nor from the Apostacy of the Tempter; neither was sovereign Worship demanded. No: the Ground of his Refusal is, because religious Worship is God's incommunicable Right. For 'tis written, *Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, &c.*

But because I have mention'd this already, I shall insist no farther upon it. To proceed therefore: St. Paul teaches us, how different the Notions and Practices of Christians ought to be from the Heathens concerning the Object of religious Worship. For, says he, *tho' there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or Earth, (as there be Gods many and Lords many, in the Opinion of the Heathens:) But to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, &c. and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.* Now we are to observe, that the *Platonists* and *Pythagoreans*, who were eminent Sects of Philosophers among the *Grecians* to whom St. Paul wrote; These
Men,

¹ Cor.
viii. 5, 6.

Men, tho' they own'd one supreme Being, Maker of all things; yet they suppos'd him to have committed the Government of the World to those they call'd Celestial Deities, between whom and Mankind they believ'd a middle sort of Excellency, whom they call'd Dæmons or Angels, whose Office it was to transact Business between both Parties; presenting themselves as Mediators to the one, and bringing down Orders and Blessings to the other. Now, to these inferior and upper Gods they directed most of their external and solemn Worship. Not that they disown'd a supreme God, or pass'd him by out of Disrespect, but because they thought him far above all our Service and Adoration; or at best, that nothing but the Devotion of the Mind was acceptable to him. Thus much we may collect from St. Cyril^a, where he quotes *Porphry* for this Opinion. Which singular Notion of Honour was entertain'd by the late *Incas* of *Peru* and by the *Mandarins* of *China*; which

^a Cyril. cont. Julian, Lib. ii. Pag. 60.

is the Reason they shew so little outward Reverence to the supreme God. Now, we have great Reason to believe, that the Apostle spake with Reference to the Scheme of Divinity received in those Places; for, if he had not alluded to the common Notions of the Heathen Religion, his Discourse would have been obscure and unintelligible; therefore, the most natural Interpretation of his Words is, That God the Father and Maker of all Things, is to us *Christians*, instead of the many celestial Gods worship'd by the *Heathen*; and therefore, the Worship of the other ought to be foreborn. And, as for a Mediator between the supreme God and Mankind, our Saviour was both design'd, and is abundantly qualified for this Office; and therefore we are not to have any farther recourse to the Intercession of Dæmons or Angels to this purpose. For, *to us there is but one God, the Father, &c.* And in this Sense the Place is understood by *Theophylact*. But to put the Meaning farther out of Question, it will not be improper to consult a

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parallel

parallel Place of the same Apostle, where his Expression is more clear. Now, he
1 Tim. ii. tells us, *there is one God; and one Me-*
5. *diator between God and Man, the Man*
Christ Jesus. As if he had said, as 'tis
certain there is one God and no more,
so 'tis equally true, that there is but one
Mediator: One Mediator to whom we
are to have Recourse. For though we
have Reason to believe the Saints and An-
gels solicit for us, yet we are not to
worship and address them for this Pur-
pose; as will be farther proved after-
wards. Indeed, before the *the Word was*
made Flesh and dwelt among us, there
was something more of Colour and Excuse
in desiring the Ministers of Heaven to pre-
sent our Petitions; when God had no-
thing but his own infinite Perfections
about him, it was not so great a Fault to
be afraid of approaching his Majesty, and,
as the Children of *Israel* did *Moses*, to
desire some Third and more acceptable
Being to speak for us. But now since he
has pleased to take our Nature upon him;
since he has condescended to the littleness
1 of

of our Apprehensions; and made himself experimentally sensible of the Infirmities; and Pains, and Passions incident to humane Nature, that so we might have the stronger Assurance of his Compassion; Since we have these Advantages, what need we run after Dæmons and departed Spirits for Patronage and Protection? Since *Jesus the Son of God is ascended into the Heavens, and ever lives to make Intercession for us*; since he is Omnipotent in his Divine, and allied to us in his humane Nature, why do not we go directly to the Throne of Grace? How unaccountable must it be to address ourselves elsewhere, as if we either suspected his Kindness or his Power? God has now united himself to Man, therefore there needs no middle Excellency to bespeak his Favour and Acceptance. By granting the World so glorious a Saviour of their own Kind, he has given them the most powerful Argument to draw them off from the Worship of their Fellow-Creatures: And therefore tho' he *winked at their former Ignorance*, yet
now

now he expects they should *repent*, and turn from the Vanity of their Devotion to the Living God. For as 'tis plain by natural Reason, that there is but one God; so since the Incarnation of his Son, 'tis likewise more apparent that there is to be *but one Mediator between God and Man, the Man* Christ Jesus. This seems to be the most easy and obvious Paraphrase upon the Words. 'Tis true it may be said, *there is but one Mediator*, who is *the Author and Finisher of our Salvation*, who has paid a sufficient Ransom for us, and pleads for us in the Right of his own Merits; yet others may be said to mediate for us in a lower Sense, because they give us the Assistance of their Prayers and their Interest, desiring God to be favourable to us, not for their sakes, but for the sake of our Redeemer.

To this I answer, granting that Saints and Angels intercede for us, which I don't deny; yet it appears from this Text that we are not to make this Use of them, nor pray to them upon this Account.

Account. For as the *one God*, which the Apostle mentions, is opposed to the many celestial Deities of the *Heathen*; so the *one Mediator between God and Man* must be opposed to that Multitude of interceding Spirits which were worship'd by the *Heathen*. And therefore, according to the Force of the Apostle's Reasoning, as we are to own but one God, so neither are we to apply ourselves to any more than one Mediator. For if his saying *there is one Mediator*, does not confine us to a single Person; then neither does his saying *there is one God*, prove the Unity of the Godhead, nor forbid us to acknowledge more Gods than one. Neither will the modern Distinction, between Mediators of Redemption and Intercession, give any Relief in this Case: For, the Apostle most certainly alluding to the Practice of the *Heathens*; for the *Jews*, as has been proved, did not pretend to any Mediators, but address'd themselves directly to God Almighty: The Apostle, I say, alluding to the Practice of the *Heathens*,
must,

must, according to the Laws of arguing, exclude a Plurality of Mediators in the Sense in which they understood them. Now, the *Heathens* had no Notion of a Mediator of Redemption; they did not pretend that their Dæmons were of the same Nature and Dignity with the celestial Gods, nor that they had sacrificed themselves to expiate the Sins of Mortals, nor that they had given any other valuable Consideration to procure their Pardon. No: This Mystery of a Redeemer, was perfectly unknown to the *Heathen* World. The *Pagans* expected no more from their Mediators, than that they should intercede for them, present their Prayers to the superior Gods, and bring them Favours and Intelligence from the other World: In short, they look'd for no more from their Dæmons, than that they should use their Interest for them in Heaven, as Courtiers do for their Friends to the King: As appears from *Plato* and *Apuleius*, &c.

Besides, their sacrificing to the higher Gods, nay to the supreme God of all, is
an

an Argument that they did not believe their mediating Angels did any thing by way of Satisfaction for their Sins : For, if they had, they would, in all likelihood, have forborn Sacrifices, as the *Christians* did ; or else have sacrificed to none but the inferior Spirits. For by sacrificing living Creatures, it has been generally understood, that the Guilt of the Offender is unexpiated, and that he ought to die as the Victim does. Now, if the Heathen believed their Mediators had paid a sufficient Ransom for them ; why did they practise those Rites in their Religion, which were apparent Signs that there was no Atonement, no Propitiation made for their Sins prior to their sacrificing ? To sum up the Argument therefore, since the Apostle in this Place, where he mentions a Mediator, speaks with Relation to the Opinion and Practice of the *Heathen* ; since the *Heathen* did not believe their Mediators did any thing more than intercede for them ; therefore, where he tells us *there is but one Mediator between God*

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and

and Man, he must mean, but one Mediator which ought to be applied to as such; for the Heathen had no Notion of any other. And if there be but one Mediator of Intercession, so far as Application is concern'd; then the *Roman* Distinction, upon which so much Weight is laid, won't hold. Which was the Thing to be proved.

But here we are to observe, that notwithstanding the Indefencibleness of such Application, we are not to draw a Parallel between such Worship, and the Heathen and *Israelitish* Idolatry: As if the Texts in the *Old* and *New Testament* would bear against the Church of *Rome*: As if the *Roman Catholicks* Application to Saints and Angels was equally criminal with the Idolatry of the *Canaanites*, &c. imitated by the Children of *Israel*. For here the Comparison won't hold, the Parallel fails, and the Charge is swell'd extravagantly too high.

For, *First*, These Heathens sacrificed their Children, *shed innocent Blood, and offer'd their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils.*

Secondly,

Secondly, Not only their Gods, but their Worship was licentious^b: 'Twas a Shame, says St. Paul, to speak of those Things which were done them in secret.

Now the Church of Rome applies to none but good Beings in her Liturgy^c; neither is there any Circumstance of sanguinary Cruelty, or immoral Practice in her Worship: Therefore the Texts of Scripture which so severely condemn Idolatry, won't reach her; neither can they be applied without great Injustice.

II. I now proceed to the second thing at first propounded, *viz.* To prove, from the Testimony of the *Ancients*, that Religious Worship is to be given to none but God. And under this Head, there will be more Texts of Scripture produc'd for the Proof of this Doctrine.

To begin. St. *Justin Martyr*, who has been mention'd already, shall be produc'd again somewhat more at large. This Martyr, who lived very near the

^b See Clem. Alexand. Arnob. & Voss. de Idololat.

^c See Ritual. Rom. p. 135, 136. Edit. Antwerp.

Apostles, in giving an Account of the *Christian* Religion to the Emperors, tells them "that the *Christians* were to "worship none but God," and quotes my Text to prove it. And a little after, when he had alledg'd the Text of *giving to Cæsar the Things which are Cæsar's, and to God the Things which are God's*; he immediately subjoins, "As an Illustration of this Command, we worship "none but God," says he, "but in "other Things we are willing to do you "Service^d."

I shall next produce the Testimony of the Church of *Smyrna* upon the Martyrdom of St. *Polycarp*, who was St. *John's* Disciple. Now, in this Letter to the Church of *Philomelium* in *Pontus**, they relate "that some Heathens, would not "have had the Body of *Polycarp* given "to the *Christians*, lest they should leave "*Christ* and worship *Polycarp*: But "these *Heathens*," says the Church of

^d Apol. II. p. 63, 64. & Dial. cum Tryph. p. 28.

* Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. Lib IV. c. 15.

“ *Smyrna*, were perfectly ignorant how
 “ impossible it is for us *Christians*, ei-
 “ ther to leave *Christ* who suffer’d for
 “ the whole World, or to worship (σέ-
 “ βειν) another; for, (προσκυνᾶμεν) we
 “ worship him because he is the Son of
 “ God; as for the Martyrs, (ἀγαπᾶμεν ἀ-
 “ ξίως) we have a due Regard and Love
 “ for them, as being the Disciples of our
 “ Lord, and because of their Charity and
 “ Resolution, ” Where by the way, we
 may remark the Reason the Church of
Smyrna gives why they worshipped *Christ*,
 and that is, because he is the Son of God;
 which plainly implies, that if he had
 been less, they would not have done it.

But to proceed.

Irenæus, who was St. *Polycarp*’s Dis-
 ciple, tells us, ^f “ That the Church did
 “ not work any Miracles by Invocation
 “ of Angels, or by any unlawful Curio-
 “ sity; but addressing her prayers to God
 “ who made all Things, and calling upon

^f *Iren. Lib. II. c. 57. & L. IV. c. 25. To which
 may be added Tertul. adv. Judæos.*

“ the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*,
 “ was enabled to perform those extraor-
 “ dinary Things for the Benefit of Man-
 “ kind. ”

Farther, *Theophilus Antiochenus* gives the Reason why 'twas not lawful for them to worship or adore the Emperor, viz. “ Because the Emperor was not ordain'd to be worshipp'd, *προσκυνῆσαι*, “ but to be honour'd with convenient Honour. For the Emperor is not God: “ but promoted to his Authority by God: “ And as a King won't suffer any of his “ Subjects to take his Titles and Name “ upon him, so 'tis not lawful for any “ other to be worshipp'd, *προσκυνῆσαι*, “ but God alone. ” And here we may see, this Father makes a Distinction between Honour and Worship; the first he grants is due to the Emperor, but the latter is to be reserv'd for God. For, says he, “ The Emperor is not to be “ worshipp'd, because he is not God: ” Now it can't with any Colour be pretend-

§ Theoph. Antioch. ad Autol.

ed, that the Emperors desired any more than an inferior Kind of Worship: For, 'tis scarce imaginable that they should be so stupid as to demand that Adoration which was proper to the supreme God; as if they had made the whole World, as well as govern'd Part of it. Now if it was lawful to give a lower Sort of Religious Worship to any Creature, Kings and Emperors would have a better Title to it than the Inhabitants of the other World: For tho' they are less in themselves, they are greater to us. Excellency of Nature, where it has no Dominion, may challenge Admiration, but not Worship: For, Worship implies an Acknowledgment, not only of Inferiority, but of Dependence and Subjection. Now, because we are certain God has given the Prince Authority over us, but we have no Assurance that we are Subjects to the Angels; therefore though the Prince falls short of the Perfection of those glorious Spirits, yet he deserves a greater Respect from us, because we are under his Jurisdiction.

To go on. *Origen* shall appear again with farther Evidence. This Father, in answer to his Adversary's Objection, with which he seems surpriz'd " why " the *Jews*, who worshipp'd Heaven " and the Angels, should pay no religious Respect to the Sun, Moon and " Stars, which were so beneficial to the " World." To this *Origen* replies, " that " *Celsus* was very much mistaken : That " the *Jews* had no other religious Object " but God the Lord and Creator of all " Things ; and that the Worship of Angels was a plain Transgression of their " Law. And then tells us, that the " *Jews* were forsaken by God Almighty " for worshipping the Host of Heaven ; " and quotes *Jeremy* vii. 17. xlv. 17." Now we are to observe that *Origen's* Principles were such, that if he believ'd a religious Application to Angels lawful, he could not have condemn'd the Worship of the heavenly Bodies : For he thought the Sun and Stars were all alive, and inhabited by mighty and intelligent Spirits. But to put his Opinion beyond all Dispute, he

he presently after quotes *Coloss. ii. 18. Let no Man beguile you of your Reward, in a voluntary Humility and worshipping of Angels, &c.* And then positively affirms, “^h That neither *Christians* nor *Jews* worshipped Angels”. And in another Place he plainly affirms, “That our Prayers are to be address’d to none but the great God, and to his only begotten Son, who, as our Priest, will present our Supplications to his Father”. But, to reply, that *Origen* meant that God was only to be pray’d to ultimately, as the independent and original Author of all Good; to argue thus, is perfectly to misunderstand the Father. For *Celsus* was here pleading for the Invocation of Dæmons or Angels, which he affirm’d to be the Ministers of God, and contended for no more than that they should be address’d as such, and worshipped in Subordination to the supreme Beingⁱ. To this *Origen* answers, “That the most accep-

^h Orig. cont. Cels. Lib. V. p. 234, &c. & p. 395.

ⁱ Pag. 381.

“table Way of serving God, was to give
“him the entire Devotion of our Souls;
“that a *Christian* was not to worship
“God and his Creatures together.” I
grant *Origen* thought *Celsus*’s Dæmons
were Devils; but then he gives such
Reasons against worshipping them, as
will equally hold against good Angels.
And elsewhere ^k he excludes them as ex-
pressly as ’tis possible: For, speaking of
good Spirits, he says, “They are call’d
“Angels from their Office; and upon
“Account of the Excellence of their Na-
“ture the Scripture sometimes styles them
“Gods, but not with an Intention that
“they should be ador’d. For, says he,
“*All Supplications, Prayers, Interces-*
“*sions, and Thanksgivings* are to be ad-
“dress’d to the supreme God, by the Me-
“diation of our High-Priest, who is su-
“perior to all Angels, and no less than
“the living God.” Here sure it can’t
be denied that the Father has spoke home
to the Point. I might produce several

^k Lib. v. p. 233.

Testimonies more out of him, but these may suffice.

That St. *Cyprian* was of *Origen's* Opinion, appears by his quoting the *xixth* of the *Revelations*, *v. 10.* where St. *John* is forbidden to worship the Angel. This Place the Father cites with Approbation, without the Comments and Explications of the *Roman-Catholick* Divines upon it; from whence we may infer, he thought it it absolutely unlawful ¹.

The next Testimony shall be the Council of *Laodicea* ^m, which denounced an *Anathema* against those that worshipped Angels. But here 'tis pretended, that this Canon is only levell'd against those *Hereticks* who held the Angels brought Salvation by delivering the Law, and worshipped them exclusively of our Saviour. But, that this is not the meaning of the Council, may be made good, 1. By observing, that some *Roman-Catholicks* have mis-recited this Canon,

¹ Cypr. de Bono Patientiæ.

^m Can. 35.

and pretend the right Reading is *Anguli*, and not *Angeli*; but the *Greek* Original will by no means allow this Correction.

2. Those who alledge that the Canon only condemns those who worshipped Angels exclusively of our Saviour, mistake the Sense, as is apparent, 1. Because the Council condemns Angel-worship in general and comprehensive Terms, without any restraining Clause or Limitation: Whereas, had they thought it lawful in any respect, such a prudent Assembly, as we may reasonably collect, would have distinguish'd the Case, remark'd the Fault, and pointed their *Anathema* only upon the Irregularities and Excesses of such a Worship. 2. Tho' those who are censured, are said to forsake the Church, yet this implies no more than that they held private *Conventicles*, as the Canon intimates. For, had they maintain'd the Angels brought Salvation by publishing the *Law*; had they look'd upon them as their proper and primary Mediators; had they neither pray'd to our Saviour, nor worshipped him, they had been no *Christians*;

tians ; and if so, they were out of the Jurisdiction of the Council : For, as *St. Paul* says, *What have we to do with them without ?* 'Tis not the Custom of the Church to excommunicate *Jews, Pagans, or Apostates*, for that would be to exclude those from a Society that had gone off already ; and besides, her Power does not extend beyond the Pale of *Christendom*. 'Tis plain therefore, the *Anathema* of the Council is level'd against those who had not wholly abandon'd the Worship of our Saviour. What therefore could they be condemn'd for, but for worshipping the Angels together with him, and addressing more Mediators than one ?

St. Athanasius, the great Champion of the Church against the *Arians*, charges those *Hereticks* very high for worshipping *Christ*, if, as they said, he was any thing less than God. ⁿ " What have the "*Arians* to do, says he, with the Scriptures ; or why do those Men alledge 'em, " who affirm the *Word* of God to be a

ⁿ Athan. cont. Athan. Orat. i. p. 286. Edit. Par.

" Creature,

" Creature, and according to the Custom of
 " the *Heathens*, worship a Creature *ὡς θεὸν*
 " ἢ κτίσιν instead of the Creator. And
 a little forward °, " The *Arians*, conti-
 nues he, " opposing themselves to the
 " Scriptures, say that *Christ* is not the
 " true God, but called God only by way
 " of Participation, as other created Ex-
 " cellencies are. But the Apostle blames
 " the *Heathen*, because they worshipped
 " a Creature, saying they served the
 Rom. i. " Creature more, or rather than the
 25. " Creator. But these *Arians*, in re-
 " gard they affirm *Christ* a Creature,
 " and worship him under that Notion,
 " how do they differ from the *Heathen*?
 " Does not the Reproof of the Apostle
 " fall to their Share? Does he not direct-
 " ly condemn and complain of them?"
 This Father having proved that the An-
 gels waited upon our Saviour, and wor-
 shipped him; adds, " They adored him,
 " not because he was of a higher Order
 " than themselves, but because he was

“ of a distinct and uncreated Nature.
 “ For, if Dignity and height of Station
 “ were a sufficient Ground for Adorati-
 “ on, all inferior Angels would worship
 “ their Superiors: But 'tis not so, for
 “ *κρίσμα ὃ κρίσμασι ἔπεσιν*, one Crea-
 “ ture is not to worship another. And
 after he has produced the Instance of St.
Peter forbidding *Cornelius* to worship Acts x.
 him, and the Angels forbidding St. *John*, Rev. xix.
 he concludes, That God alone is to be
 worshipped.

St. *Basil* agrees exactly with St. *Atha-
 nasius*. “ For, they, the *Arians*, says P
 “ he, who affirm the only begotten Son of
 “ God is a created Substance, and notwith-
 “ standing worship him and give him di-
 “ vine Honours, *θεολογῶντες*, they bring
 “ in Heathenism directly, by serving the
 “ Creature and not the Creator. From
 this Testimony we may observe two things,

I. That those who join God and his
 Creatures together, did not, in St. *Basil's*
 Opinion, serve the Creator, because they

P Basil. cont. Sabell. Arian. c. 1.

did not do it in a Way suitable to his Nature and Commands. For, in this Sense only the *Arians* could be said not to serve the Creator. For otherwise, they worshipped God the Father in the most honourable and distinguishing Manner.

2. We may observe, that St. *Basil* thought Praying and Singing religious Hymns to a created and invisible Being, tho' the Worshipers believed it to be no more than a Creature, was giving it divine Honours. Now this could be no more than Relative *Latria*, at the most ; and therefore, sovereign and absolute Worship is not the only Peculiar of God Almighty, as the Roman Catholicks maintain.

Farther, St. *Gregory Nazianzen*, arguing against those who denied the Divinity of the second and third Persons in the Trinity, does in Sense, affirm : " That
" if the Son and Holy Ghost were creat-
" ed, our worshipping them might be
" parallel with that of the *Sidonians*,
" who worshipped *Chemoth* and *Astarte* :

8 Nazianz. Orat. xl. in Baptism.

“ For in this Case, the two Persons of
“ the Trinity would be no more than our
“ Fellow-Servants.

To the same Purpose St. *Chrysostom*
speaks, * “ That the *Arians* and *Mace-*
“ *donians*, holding there was a greater
“ and a lesser God, and worshipping that
which they said was created, introduced
“ *Heathenism* again.

Farther, *Epiphanius* reproves *Ori-*
gen very smartly, because in his Opinion,
it seems, that Father did not think ho-
nourably enough of the Divinity of our
Saviour. And asks him, “ How our Sa-
“ viour could be lawfully ador’d, if he
“ was *Deus factus*. ” And after a great
deal of warm Dispute and Expostulation,
he concludes that “ Nothing created was
“ to be ador’d or worshipp’d, προσκυμεν.
“ For, if this was permitted, says he,
“ then we might worship a great many
“ other Things with the Creator. ” And
elsewhere he adds, * “ That if our Saviour

* Περὶ τῆς ἀγίας Τριάδος. Edit. Savil.

* Epiphan. Hæres. lxiv. N. 8. Hæres. lxi N. 31.

“ be not the true God, he is not to be
“ worshipp’d. There is another Place
where he delivers his Opinion concerning
those Women who worshipp’d the blessed
Virgin, and offer’d a Cake to her. Part
of which Testimony for the Severity of
the Language, I shall omit. But where he
is more moderate, he expostulates with
them in this Manner: “ Which of all
“ the Prophets, says he, ever suffered a
“ Man to be worshipped, not to speak of
“ a Woman? Altho’ the blessed Virgin
“ has never so great Excellencies, her Na-
“ ture remains the same with others: But
“ neither is *Elias*, who was carried in
“ a fiery Chariot to Heaven, and is now
“ living, nor St. *John*, who was parti-
“ cularly favour’d by our Saviour, nor
“ *Thecla*, nor any other of the Saints,
“ to be worshipp’d. If God does not
“ allow the Angels to be worshipp’d,
“ much less the Daughter of *Anna* and
“ *Joachim*“. To whom our Saviour

† Id Hæref. lxxviii. N. 23.

“ Hæref. lxxix. N. 5.

“ says

“ says on purpose, *What have I to do*
 “ *with thee?* And lest any one should
 “ think more than was fitting of her, he
 “ calls her *Woman*, as foreseeing the
 “ Schisms, &c. that would come into the
 “ World by excessive Veneration. And
 “ therefore he bids Men have a Care of
 “ too great an Admiration of the Saints,
 “ lest it should led them into this dan-
 “ gerous Error: That those who extol
 “ the blessed Virgin, are equally to
 “ blame with those who depress her; too
 “ great Praises being apt to become an
 “ Occasion of Milcarriage.” And he
 repeats it twice, as a thing not to be for-
 gotten, “ *ἡ Μαρία ἐν τιμῇ, ὁ θεὸς προσκυ-*
 “ *νᾷ*, Honour *Mary*, but worship
 “ God: ” And lest any one should think
 Worship was a Part of that Honour due
 to her, he says expressly, * “ *Τὴν Μαρίαν*
 “ *μηδεὶς προσκυνᾷτω*: Let no Man wor-
 “ ship the blessed Virgin; for that be-
 “ longs neither to the Woman, nor to
 “ her Husband, nor to Angels, but to

* Hæres. lxxix. N. 7, 9.

“ God alone.” Now if *Ephiphanius* was so severe against those who worshipp’d the Blessed Virgin, tho’ one would think, in a very moderate Way to what has been done since ; for, at this time she had neither Chapels, nor Images, nor Prayers made to her in the publick Liturgy : If this Father were now living, we may guess how he would treat some modern Christians, by what he has said already.

St. *Augustine* shall come next, who is full for the same Doctrine. He remarks, “ y That the Angel in the *Revelations* forbids the paying him any Worship ; that he was the Apostle’s Fellow-servant, and that God was only to be worshipp’d. That the Angels, those most excellent Ministers of Heaven, desire we should join with them in the Worship of none but God^z.” And in the same Book he has these Words ; “ *Ecclesia Catholica solum Deum pu-*

y August. de Doctr. Christian. Lib. I. c. 33.

z Augustin. de vera Religione, c. 55.

*“rissime atque castissime colendum prae-
 “dicat : nullam nobis adorandam crea-
 “turam inducens, cui servire jubea-
 “mur.”* And, that this learned Father
 may not be charg’d with writing Incon-
 sistencies, it may not be improper to ob-
 serve, that the last Sermon *de Sanctis*,
 where the Author prays to the Blessed
 Virgin and all the Saints, is mistakenly
 reckon’d to this Father ; and given up as
 spurious by the learned *Benedictines* in
 their famous Edition of St. *Augustine’s*
Works.

Thus we have seen what the Fathers,
 for the first four hundred Years, taught
 concerning the Invocation of Saints and
 Angels. And here I have reported their
 Testimonies, not from any casual, inco-
 herent Passages, but from their avow’d
 Principles, from set and formal Disputes ;
 in which Discourses we may be assur’d,
 they deliver’d nothing but what they
 had consider’d, nothing but what they
 believ’d agreeable to the Doctrine of the
 Church. And, therefore, whatever some
 of the latter of them have said upon

some passionate Solemnity, or in the Heat of an Harangue, which looks like Invocation of Saints, ought in Reason to pass for no more than rhetorical Flourishes and general Wishes. Such unusual Sallies of Respect upon extraordinary Occasions, are to be understood with Allowance, and look'd upon as the Effects of Transport and Elocution rather than Judgment. For, when a Man strives to ornament, and warm, and enliven a Discourse, he must heighten and amplify the Ideas of Things beyond their just Proportion: And, therefore, 'tis unreasonable to interpret him up to the Rigour of the Letter.

I shall conclude this Head with *Theodoret*, who liv'd after the Middle of the fifth Century, and looks somewhat ambiguous and unresolv'd.

This Father in his Comment upon 2 Coloss. v. 18. *Let no Man beguile you in a voluntary Humility and worshipping of Angels, &c.* this Father, I say, upon this Text, reports "there were
" *some Christians*, (for *Christians* they
" must

“ must he, as I have already proy’d)
 “ that introduc’d the Worship of Angels:
 “ Τῇ τὴν πάλαι, this distemper’d Wor-
 “ ship continued in *Phrygia* and *Pisidia*,
 “ and to check this Disorder a Council
 “ met at *Laodicea*, and forbid the Wor-
 “ ship of Angels:” He observes far-
 “ ther, “ That tho’ this Application to
 “ Angels was pretended to proceed from
 “ Humility, and particular Regard to the
 “ supreme Being, yet there was nothing
 “ better than Pride at the Bottom: That
 “ the Apostle condemn’d it as such, by
 “ saying, *He intruded into those Things*
 “ *which he had not seen, vainly puffed*
 “ *up by his fleshly Mind: Intruding into*
 “ *those Things which he had not seen;*
 “ that is, as *Theodore* expounds the
 “ Text, *not arguing from solid Grounds,*
 “ *and true Principles.*”

From this Comment ’tis plain, *Theo-*
dore cites the Council of *Laodicea* with
 Approbation, and by consequence con-
 demns Angel Worship: And the Reasons
 which declare against Application to An-
 gels for their Intercession, one would

think, should include the Martyrs and Saints, these latter being of an inferior Order; from whence that their Interest must be less, looks not improbable.

2. The Primitive Church suppos'd the Angels in a higher Situation, and attending the Throne of God: This Privilege they did not believe enjoy'd by the Saints till the Resurrection: And from this Difference of Situation it seems to follow, they must infer the Saints in a Condition of Disadvantage for soliciting.

However *Theodoret*, tho' no Advocate for Recourse to Angels, yet at the End of the Life of every famous *Religious*, desires the Benefit of their Prayers, tho' commonly in the third Person, and without direct Application. I say, commonly; for at the End of the last Life he has these Words, *ἰκετεύω δὲ τούτους, &c.* * "I entreat those whose Lives I have written, not to despise me for being beneath their honourable Station; but

* Theod. Hist. Religios.

“ to draw me up to the Height of Improvement, and qualify me for their Company ”.

And in his eighth Discourse, *de curandis Græcorum Affectibus*, he affirms “ the Invocation of Saints was very beneficial ”.

Now, if these Places stand clear of Interpolation, his Opinion is plain. But then it must be answered, that not only the *Scriptures*, but the *Fathers* already cited of the first four Centuries, are evidently against him. Now these Authorities of the first Class, this Cloud of Witnesses, are more than sufficient to disable his Assertion, and break the Force of his Precedents. To which I may add, that these Instances of this *Father* prove no more than novel Usages in some Parts of the *East*, and not the Practice of the universal Church.

For the Purpose. 'Tis most unlikely such Addresses should have prevail'd amongst the *Christians* in *Africa*, since *St. Augustine*, who was contemporary with

with *Theodoret*, has declar'd so fully against them.

I should now proceed to prove, that religious Worship ought to be given to none but God from the Reason of the Thing, from the Nature of God and Men, and from the Relation they have to each other. But of this in the next.

Now to God the Father, &c.



SERMON



SERMON IX.

St. LUKE iv. 8.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.



FROM the Text I endeavoured to prove that religious Worship ought to be appropriated to God; this Point was to be made good,

I. From the Doctrine of the Scriptures.

2

II. From

II. From the Testimony of the Antients. And

III. From the Reason of the Thing.

The two first Heads I have gone thro' already. I shall now proceed to maintain my Proposition from the Reason of the Thing, *i. e.* from the Nature of God and Men and glorify'd Spirits, and from the Relation they have to each other. And here I shall endeavour to prove these four Things:

I. That we ought to worship none but God, because of the peculiar Excellency of his Nature and the Sovereignty he has over us.

II. That that Part of religious Worship which consists in Prayer ought to be address'd to none but God; because our applying to any middle Excellencies for Aid and Assistance is apt to make us negligent, and have an ill Effect upon our Lives.

III. Supposing the Lawfulness of worshipping Saints and Angels only doubtful, it was better to omit it; because we
may

may be as well assur'd of their Intercession without it. And therefore,

IV. The worshipping of them is so far from procuring their Favour, that on the contrary it rather makes them less inclinable to assist us.

In speaking to these Particulars, I shall have Occasion to mention some Objections which will lye in the Way.

I. We ought to worship none but God upon the Account of the peculiar Excellency of his Nature, and the Sovereignty he has over us.

'Tis a Piece of Justice generally acknowledg'd, that all Beings should have a Regard paid them proportionably to the Dignity of their Nature, the Advantages we receive by them, and the Jurisdiction they have over us: Neither ought we only to have a true Apprehension of these Distinctions in our Minds, but declare it visibly in our Actions, that others may perceive our Notions are right, and our Dispositions virtuous; that we are willing to pay an Esteem to abstracted Excellency, a Submission to Authority,
and

and an Acknowledgment for Benefits receiv'd; and all this suitably to the Worth of Things and Persons. Such a Behaviour as this, besides other Advantages, will make the World have a better Opinion of our Understanding and Justice, and confide in us accordingly, which will tend to the Benefit of *Society*. Now the Perfections of God are transcendent and peculiar to himself; the most glorious Creature falls infinitely short of him; he is the original Cause of all Being and Blessings, the Creator and supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth. And since the Excellencies of God are of a peculiar supereminent Nature, our Acknowledgments of them ought to be so too. The Design of publick Worship is to make a visible Confession of our Dependence upon God, to own him as the Maker of the World and to praise him for all the Advantages we enjoy. And, to make our Acknowledgments of God rational, they ought to be proportion'd to his Nature, and such as we give to no other Being. Since no Person helped him
him

him to create the World, nor joins with him in the Preservation of it, but all Things are made by him, and supported by his sole Power; therefore when we pretend to shew others what honourable Thoughts we have of him, we should do it in a singular and distinguishing Manner. For since the Reasons of religious Worship are peculiar to God, since they are founded upon his Creation and Government of the World, upon his Omnipotency and supreme Authority, upon this Account the external Signs of his Worship ought to be peculiar too. For if we give the same visible Reverence to God and his Creatures, how can others understand that we believe the one to be infinitely greater than the other? The Notion of his Superiority in our Minds is not sufficient in this Case; for that is known to no body but our selves: Therefore we cannot be said to worship God publickly, unless we profess our Belief of his Supremacy by a proper and particular Behaviour; unless our Service has some Circumstances of Advantage
and

and extraordinary Veneration, which we never shew upon any other Occasion. For can any one tell that we esteem one Person infinitely above another, when he sees our Respect to them both, promiscuous and undistinguish'd? And of what ill Consequence such an Example may be is easy to imagine. Besides, except the Distinction between God and his Creatures be made legible and apparent in the Honour which is given him, the Justness of our Ideas will be apt to decay, and we shall be in Danger of giving away some Part of his incommunicable Perfections, and drawing towards a Principle of Levelling. Therefore the great Reason why we make our Bodies join with our Minds in the Adoration of God Almighty, and acknowledge him in an open and visible Manner; the Reason is not because he needs it; but that the Belief of one God may be confirmed in us by external and sensible Acts, which cannot be done, except there is something in his Worship, which is not in any other. This external and peculiar Worship is
neces-

necessary to keep up a due Reverence of
 God in Mens minds. For the generality
 are not always at leisure, nor possibly
 well prepar'd, to prove the Attributes of
 God by a Chain of Discourse, and meta-
 physical Reasonings. If the Vulgar should
 see their Prince no better attended and
 observed than themselves, they would
 be apt to overlook his Quality, and sus-
 pect he never had any Commission from
 Heaven; and therefore the Splendor of
 the Court is designed to keep up the Re-
 putation of the Government, and to put
 the Subjects in Mind of their Inferiority.
 The greatest Part of Mankind must have
 remote Truths, especially those which
 relate to the Perfections of spiritual Be-
 ings, conveyed by sensible Objects: Their
 Organs must be struck as well as their
 Understandings; for if these invisible
 Things are only represented in their na-
 ked Essences, and enforced by nothing
 but dint of Logick, the Impression will
 not be distinct and durable enough to
 affect their Minds, and govern their Prac-
 tice. 'Tis a Rule in Princes Courts,

U

and

and rationally settled, that Subjects, though of the first Quality, should not be taken Notice of in the *Presence*. And nothing is more generally acknowledged, than that the supreme Governor should have particular Marks of Honour: Otherwise the Prerogative of Majesty would be injured, and the Subject might be mistaken for the King. In like manner, if our Worship is not appropriated to God Almighty, if our religious Solemnities, which are as it were his *Presence*, are not entirely reserved to his Honour; if we communicate the Adoration we offer him to any of his Servants; this weakens the Notion of a supreme Being, confounds the Difference between finite and infinite, and sets the Creature and the Creator almost upon Terms of equality. It takes away as much as in us lies, the Peculiarity of God's Excellency and Dominion, and tends to lessen our Apprehensions of him. And here 'tis not sufficient to say that the Sense of our own Unworthiness, and the Greatness of God, makes us address to the Saints,
I and

and desire their Intercession: That our putting up our Petitions by such acceptable Hands, and at such a Distance, is a more submissive and reverential Way, than to press immediately into the divine Presence. For to this I answer, That worshipping Saints and Angels is no part of true Humility. If it was requisite in point of Reverence to present our Petitions to God by the Mediation of good Spirits, then there was greater Reason for the Invocation of them under the *Jewish*, than under the *Christian* Church. For before the Incarnation, there was no Approaches to be made, but to the pure unimbodyed Deity: But since the *Word was made Flesh*, the Majesty of God is as it were tempered, and allayed; it does not flash upon the Mind with that amazing Brightness as formerly. Part of his Design, in taking our Nature upon him, was to encourage our Application, by making his Greatness more approachable and condescending to us. And though the Worship of Saints and Angels carried a better Colour of Humility under the

Old Testament than since; yet there we find no manner of Argument for any such thing. There is neither Precept to enjoin it, nor Example to warrant it, nor Principle to infer it. Nay, are not all the Instances of Prayer we meet with, directed to God alone? But to shew the Vanity of this Pretence farther, the Scripture, both the Law and Gospel, pronounce positively for direct Invocation of God. For do not they expressly say, *That he is the God which beareth Prayer, and to him shall all Flesh come; that we should call upon him in the time of Trouble, and go boldly to the Throne of Grace?* Now certainly 'tis no Presumption, no Irreverence to do that which God has commanded us: If we are apprehensive of his Displeasure, after so many Encouragements, and stand off after such express Declarations of his Will; this rather argues that we are not so humble as we should be, than otherwise. For does not God know best what is acceptable to himself, and most for our Advantage? Therefore, what does our
refusing

refusing his Invitations, our being afraid to take that Liberty which he has allowed, nay, our scrupling that which he has commanded; what does this imply, but that we understand the Perfection of Virtue, and the Regulations of Worship, and the Laws of Decency, better than God Almighty? Now all this is but a very indifferent sign of Humility.

Secondly, If it was an Act of proper Humility to address God by the Intercession of the Saints, then we ought never to pray directly to any Person of the Trinity; for our Devotions ought never to have any thing which carries the Face of Arrogance or Neglect, or which argues us forgetful of the infinite Distance there is between God and his Creatures. But the contrary of this is both allowed and practised by the *Romanists* themselves. So that by their Principles, the having Recourse to the Mediation of good Spirits, is but a *voluntary Humility*, as St. *Paul* calls it, a Virtue of pure Imagination, not of God's making, but our own.

II. The next thing I propounded to shew was, that religious Application to any middle Excellencies, for Aid and Assistance, is apt to make men negligent, and have an ill effect upon their Lives. People are generally too willing to reconcile their Sins, and their Happiness together. Any Expedient which promises Liberty, and dispenses with the Rigour of a good Life, will be sure of kind Entertainment; and when Men are willing to be imposed on, a small Pretence will entangle their Understandings. Therefore when any *Communion*, especially an infallible one, though she does not define for such an acceptable Doctrine; yet if she gives it any Countenance, the Fallacy must needs grow very plausible and operative. To speak to the present Case, when ill Men are given to understand that they have so many considerable Friends in the other World; this in all likelihood, will encourage them to try their Kindness, and to give them more Employment than they approve of. For what Freedoms may they not venture upon, who are
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under such a powerful Protection? How can they miscarry, who are supported by so great an Interest? Who have the Angels and Archangels, and all the Company of Heaven to solícite their Pardon, and make up their Defects? Will not God shew a Regard to his chief Ministers of *State*, and hear his glorified Elect, who cry Day and Night before him? Can the Prophets and Apostles, who were so miraculous in their Prayers upon Earth, do nothing in Heaven? Will God refuse the charitable Requests of those who have suffered so great things for his Name, and spent their Blood in defence of his Honour and his Truth? He will not thus overlook the Merits of his Saints, and discourage their Compassion. Why should we (may such People fancy) why should we trouble our selves so much about the Practice of Justice and Temperance, about the mortifying our Lusts and Passions? No, let us leave these nice Severities to those who have none but God and *Christ* to help them; as for us, who have so many Intercessours to make

our Peace, we need not be govern'd by such rigid and anxious Principles.

And how singular soever such a Discourse as this may seem, yet 'tis too apparent, it has sway'd the Practice of many *Christians*.

Of this ill Consequence of relying upon the Patronage of the Saints, *Cassander*, tho' a *Romanist*, was very sensible; nay, he complains their Church gave too much Countenance to it, by encouraging of Pilgrimages, by forg'd Miracles, and extravagant Hymns, especially to the blessed Virgin; in one of which they pray her to use the Authority of a Mother, and command her Son: And, as he adds, several considerable Persons affirm'd, that *Assuerus's* Promise to *Esther* was fulfilled to the Blessed Virgin; that God's Kingdom consisting of Mercy and Judgment, he had given the most acceptable Part of it to her: Which is the Reason, 'tis likely, she is * call'd the Mother of Mercy, the Queen of Heaven, &c.

* *Cass. Consult. Art. 21.*

Now when such Doctrines, though generally not so monstrous as this, come abroad with the Approbation of Authority; when such Opinions are encourag'd by the Solemnity of their Worship; by fulsome Harangues, and Wonder-working Relicks, the People must needs be apt to think 'tis a happy World for Sinners, and that 'tis in a manner left to their Generosity, whether they will be good or no: Especially when the Favour of these powerful Mediators may be purchas'd upon such easy Terms; when a little Respect more than ordinary shall command their Kindness; when they are so surprizingly obliging, that they cannot refuse a Man that comes a great Way to see them, though possibly he is more weary of his Journey than of his Sins; when a fair Present, though offer'd by a wicked Hand, raises their Compassion in such a visible manner, and makes them weep though they are in Marble: As if the blessed Saints, who were so far above the Temptations of Ambition and Popularity in this World, were alter'd

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to their Disadvantage since they went to Glory ; and admir'd those Trifles now, which they despis'd before. But thus the fanfy'd Interest and Indulgence of the Church *triumphant* slackens the Care and Discipline of the *militant*, and Heaven is made instrumental to debauch the Earth.

If it be objected, that seeing we count it lawful and safe to request the Prayers of our Fellow-Christians here on Earth, why may we not desire the same Favour of the glorify'd Saints ? Ought Persons to be degraded in our Esteem because they are in Paradise ? Now their Happiness, and Quality, and Goodness, is so vastly rais'd and improv'd, ought they to have a less Respect paid them than mean and miserable Mortals ? Are they not as able and willing to help us as ever ; and if so, why may we not desire their Assistance ?

To this I answer,

1. That 'tis not lawful to pray to the Saints on Earth, in the same manner that the Church of *Rome* does to those in Heaven.

Heaven. 'Tis not lawful to address them with that religious Submission, with that Solemnity and Devotion, which is customarily practis'd by the *Roman-Catholicks*. Most People would count it an excessive Esteem, if we should put our Bishop, or some extraordinary Person in the Publick Liturgy, and pray to them immediately after the blessed Trinity, at Times and Places consecrated to Religion, and with the same Postures of Respect. Now, all this is done in the Church of *Rome* to Saints and Angels. But if the best Man living had all this Reverence shewn him in a Church, if he was plac'd over the Altar, and had Incense burnt before him, as their Images have; such a Sight as this, we may believe, would be surprising to the *Roman-Catholicks* themselves, and would, in all likelihood, require no less than a peremptory Decree of Infallibility to reconcile them to it. Therefore if it should be said, that we pray to the Church militant with the same Circumstances of Regard which the *Romanists* do to the Church triumphant,

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we deny the Supposition, and affirm the Case is not rightly put.

But because this Answer only proves against our excessive Veneration of the Saints, but does not shew why we should not worship them at all, therefore I answer,

2. That there are particular Reasons for praying to those in this World, which will not hold for the other. Of the first we have Instances in Scriptures: For *Ahimelech* was commanded by a Warning from Heaven, to desire *Abraham* to intercede for him. *Job's* Friends had likewise a Command to make him their Advocate; but none of these Persons were directed to Angels, though they were Beings of far greater Rank and Excellency, which is an Argument God did not intend they should apply to their Friends in the other World.

Besides, praying for one another tends to the Honour and Encouragement of Virtue, and makes the Religious have better Quarter than otherwise they would. It promotes good Correspondence among Neighbours,

Neighbours, and fortifies their natural Inclinations to Kindness and Humanity: For, how can I injure or hate those Persons whom I have so often recommended to the Protection of Heaven, and for whom I am bound to pray with the same Affection as for my self? This interceding for each other puts it in a mean Man's Power to oblige the greatest Monarch. This Way he that has neither *Silver nor Gold* may return the Obligations of the Rich upon them, and pray himself out of Debt; which keeps Poverty from being so contemptible as otherwise it would be. For how can he that considers, insult any Part of that Congregation whose Prayers he desires in his greatest Distress; especially when, for ought he knows, the most despicable Person there may have a greater Interest in Heaven than himself? Now, sometimes Men are so poor and disabled, that their Prayers are all the Revenue they have to live upon; the Advantage of their Intercession is the only Means they have to do good to others: Therefore if this might
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not be requested, if they could not be serviceable to us in our spiritual Concerns, they would be look'd on as perfectly useless to *Society*, which might occasion their being treated with a great deal of Unkindness and Neglect. Thus, we see, there may be a fair Account given, why God should encourage our desiring the Prayers of the Church *militant*, and accept our Intercession for each other. But these Reasons will not reach the other World: For the glorious Inhabitants there, have no Occasion for any Assistance to remove Distress; and therefore not the same need to oblige us with their Prayers in hopes of a Requital. Neither need we petition them upon our own Account, because we may be as well assur'd of their Favour without it, as I shall prove afterwards. But,

3. There is not the same Likelihood of our being carried into Excesses in our Application to our Brethren here; and therefore we may more safely pray to them, than to Saints and Angels. For Mortals have so many Marks of Meanness, and Want, and Infirmary upon them, that

that there is no great Fear of over-valuing them for the good Offices they do us this Way. But the blessed Spirits have nothing that is little or perishable in their Nature; they are encircled with Glory, and made up of essential Greatness. Now, these magnificent Ideas are apt to dazzle our Understandings, and carry our Veneration of them too high; which they will be the more inclinable to do, who attribute a kind of Omnipresence to them, and believe that they can hear their Prayers all the World over, and attend to Multitudes of distant and distinct Requests, without any Mistake or Confusion. 'Tis true, our supposing the Saints, &c. able to hear us every where, as that Word is usually taken, does not amount to an Omnipresence: For, supposing they understand our World exactly, yet, for all that, they may be ignorant of what passeth in the Sun and Moon, and in all the vast Extent of Sky, in respect of which our Earth is but a small Spot. Farther, granting they saw through every Part of the Creation, and knew all the Postures of Things,

Things, all the Necessities and Dispositions of Persons ; they might, notwithstanding this comprehensive Grasp, be unacquainted with past Affairs, or unable to take a Prospect of the future. Now, if they fail'd in either of these Points, they must fall short of God's Omniscieny. Nay, to put the Case higher, supposing their Knowledge is of the same Extent with God Almighty's, yet this would be far from raising them up to a divine Attribute ; because this Excellency would be precarious and dependent ; it would be no more than borrowed : God might recal this Perfection, when he pleased ; and reduce such a glorious Understanding to the lowest Degree of Stupidity or Insensibleness. No Perfection, which is not unalterably fix'd in its Subject, and absolutely *sui juris*, can be divine. Independency is the only sovereign and distinguishing Prerogative, and the Line which cuts between God and a Creature.

But though properly speaking, no finite, no derived Excellency, how large soever, is any deifying Quality ; yet 'tis not
safe

safe to venture its being mistaken for such: For the Vulgar have but a strait Notion of Infinity. Their Philosophy is most likely to conclude, that he who knows all the Concerns of our World, may know all Things: So extensive a Perfection as this looks like the Ocean to them; they cannot see over it, and therefore are apt to imagine it has no Bounds. So that 'tis most convenient for them to believe, that such transcendent Degrees of Knowledge belong to none but God himself.

And the Case is still more dangerous, when any Church in her publick and authoriz'd Devotions addressses these glorify'd Spirits in superlative Titles, and which seem by their wording of them to be too big for any created Excellency. For Example: When they call any of them the *Fountain of Grace and Pardon, the Queen of Heaven, &c.* These Expressions are apt to convey Misapprehensions into unwary Minds, and transport them into an immoderate Submission. And in the Heat of their Admiration they will be apt to fancy their great Patrons do

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not only live, but govern in Heaven; that they are flown up into Godhead, and have either the Possession, or the Command of Omnipotency.

I come now to the

III. *Third* Thing propounded, *viz.* Supposing the Lawfulness of worshipping the Saints and Angels only doubtful, it was better to omit it, because we may be as well assur'd of their Intercession without it. The Design of worshipping, particularly of praying to Saints, &c. is either to inform them of our Wants, or to make them more inclinable to help us. Now, I shall prove that these Reasons for the Invocation of them, are perfectly insignificant. For,

1. If the Saints, &c. are capable of understanding our Necessities, they have sufficient Opportunities of knowing them without our Information: And that either by considering the Circumstances of our Condition, or by Intelligence from Spirits lately arriv'd from this World, or by observing what sort of Petitions we put up to God Almighty; so that we need not apply

ply to them as we do to our Friends here, to acquaint them with our Desires.

And therefore,

2. Our praying to them must be only in Order to make them more willing to assist us. Indeed if the heavenly Inhabitants were of the same Temper with us Mortals, there was some Reason for this Pretence: For the ill Nature of Men is often such, that they will do nothing without Courtship and servile Application: They spoil the Grace of an Obligation by Delays, and Distance, and morose Behaviour; and sometimes there is more Trouble with them than the Thing is worth. They believe their Greatness consists in the Littleness of others, and therefore they will not part with their Favours without Submissions: They think they are slighted when they are not flattered, and endeavour to make up their Defects in solid Advantages, by Haughtiness and Pretending. But all this proceeds from scandalous Principles, from Ignorance, and Meanness, and Malice. The Climate of this miserable World, does not differ

more from the Regions of Happiness, than such a Temper from those who dwell there. The blessed Spirits understand their own Height too well to fancy our Observance can make any Addition; and are too good to have any thing of State or Exceptionfness in them. There has been no Pride in Heaven since *Lucifer* was thrown out; and therefore we need not fear, that those who are there will be disoblig'd with the Omission of a little Ceremony; especially when they know we do not forbear it out of Disrespect, but for fear of offending God. Their Goodness is too absolute to clog their Assistance with any Incumbrance: Their Greatness is without Vanity, their Kindness without Design. And therefore all their Favours will come unbespoken of themselves. Their generous Charity is sufficient to oblige them to do their utmost, so that it's needless for us to go about to awaken their Beneficence by Importunity and Homage. Indeed, honourable Thoughts and Satisfaction in their Happiness, and solemn
Remembrance

Remembrance of their Virtues, are Respects which ought not to be omitted now. But as for any other, 'tis time enough to pay it, when we have the Honour to come among them. When we are past all Danger of Mistake, and understand our particular Obligations, then we may safely shew our remaining Gratitude: Neither have we any Reason to suspect the Abatement of their Affection, because our Acknowledgments are deferred so long. Now this Discourse concerning the Disposition of the Blessed, is no mere Conjecture, but a necessary Consequence of their Nature; we cannot suppose them perfectly Good, unless they act in this manner: For Goodness is nothing else but an Inclination to make others Happy. So that those who are entirely possessed of this Virtue, will need no entreaty to prompt them to oblige. For to do Good, is to follow their own Temper; 'tis the most entertaining Action they can do. Now, 'tis natural for every Being to please itself as much as is possible. And therefore to speak softly, what inexcusable Rashness

must it be to expose our selves to Danger, when we may have the same Advantage with Security? What need we run the Hazard of provoking God, when we get nothing by it? Why should we venture the throwing away our Time, and our Prayers, to Persons out of our reach, when the blessed Spirits will be as charitable of their own accord? For we are as sure they will assist us (if they can) without asking, as we are sure they are Saints, and that I suppose may be sufficient.

But here I foresee it may be objected, That if the Saints, &c. are benevolent to such a Degree, that they will assist us as much without any Worship or Entreaty as with it; then it follows *à Fortiori*, that 'tis needless to pray to God Almighty: For he is certainly the most gracious and compassionate of all Beings, and therefore why should we suspect his Goodness so much as to beg any Blessings of him? To this it may be return'd,

1. That God has commanded us to pray to himself; but not to the Saints, &c.

Now

Now all People must grant, that whatever God commands is most reasonable, though we may not always understand it. But I answer,

2. That we do not pray to God to alter him, and to make him more merciful than he was before: For that Goodness which is infinite is above any Encrease. The Design of Prayer is to alter our selves, and qualify us better for the divine Favour. Now to the effecting this, Prayer is of singular Use. For by this Means the Notion of God is preserved more fresh and operative upon us: By appearing before him in an humble and supplicating Posture, we own him for our Lord, and testify our Dependence upon him.

The Sense of so great a Presence is a good Expedient to compose our Passions, and awaken our Apprehensions of another World, and put our Minds into a wise and considering Frame. This religious Act confirms our Faith, and quickens our Hope, and infuses a certain Nobleness of Spirit upon the Confidence of

so great a Protection. And because our Minds are thus improved, when we appear before God Almighty as we ought; therefore he gives us those Blessings upon our Prayers, which we should not have had without them. Not that he has any new Dispositions to Goodness, excited by our Importunity; but because we are fitter Objects of his Bounty than we were before.

But the blessed Saints have no reason to suspend their Favours upon these Conditions: They are neither our Makers, nor Redeemers. We ought to honour them, 'tis true; but there is no Duty, no Allegiance, or Subjection due to them. Our Fears may be sufficiently awaken'd, our Affections raised, and our Spirits supported by the Sense of a Righteous and Omnipotent Being: In short, our Minds may be fully improved in all Virtues, by making God the sole Object of our Devotion: So that we need not worship any created Excellency upon this Account. From whence it follows, that tho' God will not assist us without our

Application, yet the blessed Spirits will; not that he loves us less than they do, but because our praying to him is necessary to the Being and Improvement of our Virtue, which the other is not: Nay, we are so far from strengthening our Interest this way, that now in the

Last Place, I shall endeavour to prove, that the worshipping the Saints, &c. rather makes them less inclinable to assist us. 'Tis, as was observ'd, an under-proportion'd Thought of the Goodness and Dignity of the Saints, to suppose their Kindness heighten'd by our Application: And if Respect and Importunity, though never so lawful, signify nothing with them, can we imagine they will be prevail'd on by unwarrantable Services? Will they like us ever the better for running upon apparent and unnecessary Danger, for venturing upon a Worship which has no Foundation in the Practice of either the *Jewish* or the antient *Christian* Church; which is disallowed by the *Scriptures*, and which some of themselves, when they were on Earth, condemn'd in the

the Heathens ? Will they, do we think, be delighted with those Honours which do not belong to them, and which cannot be affected without encroaching upon their Maker ? Will they encourage a Practice which weakens the Notion of a Supreme Being, which divides our Adoration and our Hopes between God and his Creatures ; and is apt to make us grow careless and secure upon the Presumption of our Numbers in Heaven ?

Can a little extraordinary Observance transport them into such Excesses of Partiality, as to be willing to assist us when we are most unworthy ? Can we oblige the blessed Spirits by our Errors and by our Sins, and will such wise Beings love us the more for doing unreasonable Things ?

God's Will is done and imitated exactly in Heaven, and all the Saints are of the same Temper and Inclinations with himself ; and therefore we may be assured when we lose his Favour, we lose theirs too. To overworship them, is the Way not to endear, but estrange them from us. By rendring ourselves less deserving

serving their Care, we check their Generosity, and abate their Affection, and make them give us Pity instead of Assistance: Those unaccountable Titles, those nauseous Addresses which they are sometimes troubled with, are so far from gaining their Point, that, if any of the Blessed are more particularly concerned with us, this is rather the Way to make them grow weary of their Guardianship. This will rather incline them to lay down their Commission, and resign their Charge, and leave us exposed to those ambitious Spirits, who love to be courted and adored. To see themselves made the Objects of such unjustifiable Worship, is, as far as we can guess at their Nature, enough to raise an holy Indignation within them: And though they are not so much affected with the Extravagance of Mortals as to be disturbed about it, (for if their Happiness depended on our Discretion, 'twould quickly have an End;) yet we may deprive them of those additional Pleasures, which they would receive from the Justice and Regularity of our Actions. For
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while Men continue in the Ways of Error, the *Scripture* will allow us to say there is not that *Joy in Heaven* which there would be at their Conversion. In short, the most effectual Way to please and engage these holy Spirits, is to do what God commands, and to obtain his Favour. For as *Origen* observes * *All the Court of Heaven follows the Judgment and Inclinations of him who reigns there, as certainly as the Shadow does the Body.* Let us therefore preserve an inviolable Regard to the divine Majesty; let us pay all our Devotions to him, and acknowledge his singular Perfections, by a solemn and distinguishing Worship. This, together with a virtuous Life, is the most successful Method to recommend us to the Esteem of the Saints. By such Practices as these we shall both have a greater Share of their Friendship, and less Occasion for their Intercession.

* Contr. Cels. p. 120.



SERMON X.

S. LUKE xii. 15.

*A Man's Life consists not in the
Abundance of those things which
he possesseth.*



THE occasion of these Words of our blessed Saviour lies in the twelfth Verse; where we find one of his Audience desiring him to decide a Controversy of Right between him and his Brother: *Master, speak to my Brother, that he divide the Inheritance with me.* Now this Request was both unsuitable and unseasonable; it being much more proper to have made his first
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Petition to one of our Saviour's Character, that he would please to instruct him farther in the Doctrine of Virtue and another Life; and not throw in his worldly Business: Not when he heard our Saviour discoursing upon so different a Subject; when he heard him instructing the Multitude about the universal Care of Providence, the Nature of his Kingdom, and the Affairs of another World. We have Reason therefore to conclude, this Person was a covetous worldly minded Man, both from the Unseasonableness of his Request, and from the Discourse of our Saviour, which immediately follows. For after he had refused to be an Arbitrator in civil Differences, he proceeds to caution his Hearers against desiring more Wealth than they had Occasion to make use of: For such a Temper would not only be of dangerous Consequence hereafter, but prove insignificant to them here: Should they heap up never so much by Care, Parsimony, or foul Practice, they would get nothing by it; for *a Man's Life consists not in the Abundance of those things which he possesseth.* By

By a Man's Life is meant the Happiness and Convenience of it: And why this does not consist in Abundance, I shall endeavour

I. To shew more at large: And then

II. I shall draw some Inferences from the Truth of this Proposition.

I. That Happiness does not consist in Abundance. Now, in order to the proving this, 'tis necessary to state the Notion of Abundance. Abundance is that Proportion which is more than sufficient: Therefore that we may know what is superfluous, we must understand wherein Sufficiency consists. Now, because the Necessities of all Men are not of the same Bigness, but are varied according to the different Accidents, Relations and Offices they meet with and stand in towards others, therefore the Notion of Sufficiency cannot consist in any common and fixt Proportion, but must be measured by the necessary and just Occasions of every Man's respective Condition.

But because Pride, Covetousness, and Luxury make Men fancy their Occasions
greater

greater than God has made them, I shall lay down two general Rules; which if we will impartially apply to our Condition, and be true to our Reason, we may judge when we have enough.

1. The first Ingredient of Sufficiency is, to be provided with Conveniencies to satisfy our natural Appetites of Hunger and Thirst, and to defend our selves from the Injury of the Weather. When we are furnish'd with what will maintain the Offices of Life in their due Vigour and Serviceableness; when this Provision may be gain'd without being forc'd upon immoderate Labour either of Body or Mind; When our Subsistence comes in without Pressure, and overstraining those Powers which God has given us: To be thus provided, if a Man was engaged only with himself, would be enough. But because the Laws of Society oblige him to be concern'd with others; therefore to make the Notion of Sufficiency compleat, I shall add

2. A second Part to it, which consists in having our Abilities large enough to answer the
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the just Expectations of the State where we live and of our domestick Relations. For, when a Man is able to satisfy the Desires of Nature, and to discharge those Obligations which his Country and Friends may reasonably expect; then it can't be denied that he is sufficiently provided for.

Now, most People are rich enough for these substantial Purposes, if either their Vice has not disabled them, or Fancy or Custom has not made them think themselves more needy than really they are.

But there are two Things which may be objected to this Way of Reasoning, which I shall answer before I proceed any farther.

I. It may be objected, that this Notion of Sufficiency is not large enough to support the Quality and Condition of a great many Persons, who ought to be more plentifully furnish'd.

To this Objection I shall return this threefold Answer.

1. If this Quality pretended has Magistracy join'd with it, and is unfurnish'd

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with a Fortune proper to support the Dignity and Expence of the Office : In this Case, a Man should resign his Post, which he may lawfully do, in regard he has seldom or never any Reason to believe that the State depends upon his single Service ; and that there are not enough besides himself, of larger Fortunes, who are sufficiently qualify'd for publick Employment. And when a Man has reduc'd himself to private Circumstances, his Necessities will be shorten'd ; and then fewer Conveniencies will serve.

2. If this Quality or Condition, which is to be kept up, is lodg'd in Private Persons, who are intrusted with no considerable Office or Authority ; then, though they are oblig'd to live obscurely, the Welfare of the Government will not suffer by it. For, provided the Magistracy can maintain a Post sufficient to command a Regard suitable to their respective Authorities, the State is sufficiently secur'd. As for private Persons, the Publick is not at all concern'd to keep up their Splendor : All that's requir'd of them is their Obedience ;

dience; which they are as likely to give in a low Condition, as in another.

3. Farther, No Persons ought to think they have less than they ought, and be dissatisfy'd because they have not the same Conveniencies of Life, which either themselves or their Ancestors enjoy'd. This I shall shew more at large; both because the Subject requires it, and because People of almost all Conditions, are apt to complain; perplexing themselves, and sometimes their Affairs too, by mistaking in this Case.

To come to the Point therefore: Either a Man's Declining is occasion'd by his Predecessors, or by himself. If the former Way; then, because all hereditary Advantage is founded in the Right of Ancestors, if he has all the Right which they had a Power to transfer to him, he has no Reason to complain; because there's no imaginable Pretence why he should have any more. But if he has less'n'd himself by his own Fault, then he has no Reason to expect Miracles to support his Vice, or make good his Negligence.

gence. Or, *lastly*, if he happens to be impoverish'd by any sudden unavoidable Accident, he should then remember, that God has taken nothing but his own; and that Providence never settles a flourishing Condition upon any Family, upon any Sort of People, without a Power of Revocation. A Man, in this Case, ought to follow the Method of Providence and draw himself into a narrower Compass: And then, tho' he has lost some of his Fortune, he'll not be really the poorer. By retrenching his Affairs, and descending into a lower Condition, a Man may make himself rich, almost when he pleases: For, let his Circumstances be never so slender, he that can satisfy the necessary Occasions of them, and has something to spare, ought to be look'd on as a wealthy Person.

3. This Notion of keeping up a Man's Quality, is often nothing else but an aspiring Humour, which affects to make an equal Appearance with those whom the Law has made his Superiors: Or else it consists in the Imitation of the extravagant Part of
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a Nation. People think they can't live agreeably to their Condition, without following the Fashion: Now, this is oftentimes nothing but the unaccountable Fancies of those who are almost intoxicated with Prosperity. 'Tis the having a great many Things and Persons to no purpose. Now, ought a Man to think himself poor, because he has not Money to fling away upon Trifles? Ought he to think himself lessen'd, because he does not copy out every odd insignificant Fancy he sees or hears of?

But 'twill be said, that Singularity, let it be in what it will, looks but monstrously; and a Man must be disesteem'd, if he does not conform to the general Custom.

There's no Question, but those who are guilty of any Excess, are apt to ridicule others that dissent from them. This, if upon no other Account, they think themselves bound to do in their own Defence. But the Question is, Whether a Man ought to be laugh'd out of his Reason? Whether he ought to do an imprudent and ridiculous Action, because he

fees others generally do so? 'Tis plain, therefore, that most People may have enough in a little, if they please. For, this Pretence of living suitably to a Man's Condition is nothing but a Chimæra, form'd by Ignorance and Pride. For, if they are private Persons, as they may be when they please, the Publick then does not require any Figure from them. Neither are they to imagine, that in point of Merit and Decency, they ought to stand upon their former Level. No: Their Business is to proportion their Expences and Desires to their present Condition, and then they'll want as little as ever. Nor, *lastly*, should they have a worse Opinion of themselves, because they are not wealthy enough to make themselves ridiculous, by appearing in all the antick and humourfome Extravagancies of others.

II. It may be objected, that this strait Notion of Sufficiency, will discourage Industry, because it consequentially forbids us aspiring after a higher Condition.

Now, I partly grant the Truth of this Objection; And believe, that if Men did

not think their Wants greater than they are; if they had not too over-valuing an Opinion of Riches, they would not take so much Pains in finding out and improving Arts as they do, for Embellishing and Curiosities, for Magnificence and War.

But withal

I answer, that if they had been less busy and inventive, they would, it may be, have been more innocent and happy. For, what's the Effect of many of these Contrivances, except the furnishing of Luxury and Pride, the assisting Ambition and Revenge, making Men more vain and mischievous, and teaching them how to debauch and murder one another faster than rustick Vice and uncultivated Ill-Nature could have instructed them? So that if the Industry of Men were discourag'd in those Arts which are martial and offensive, or which tend chiefly to the reputed Splendor of Life; the World would have been no Loser by it.

But then, *secondly*, it may be answer'd, That this Notion of Sufficiency does not condemn us to Idleness; nor forbid the

Use of a larger Fortune, when Providence lays it fairly in our way. Only we are to remember, that because a little, if prudently manag'd, will answer all the real Necessities of Life, therefore we ought to be contented with it.

If 'tis farther objected, That to be content with a little, argues Ignorance of what's desirable, or a narrow Capacity which is soon fill'd up; whereas, to reckon a great many Things necessary to our Satisfaction, is an Argument of a noble and capacious Mind, which understands it self and other Things better than to be contented with a vulgar With.

To this it may be answer'd, That not to be contented without a large Proportion of wordly Accommodations, is no more an Argument of Greatness of Mind, than a great many Props are of the Greatness and Magnificence of a Building; which, how fine soever they may be made to look to an injudicious Observer, they are a certain Argument of the Weakness of that which they support. Not to be satisfy'd with a few, but earnestly to
desire

desire a great many Things is an infallible Proof of a poor Spirit. For Desire is always a Sign of Want, because it supposes the Absence of the Thing desir'd; and consequently those who desire most Things, must in themselves be most indigent and mean. To draw our Desires into a small Compass, as 'tis the best way of keeping our Happiness within our Power, so it puts us into a Condition which has less Dependence, and consequently more of true Greatness in it. 'Tis a Sign such Persons draw nearer to Self-sufficiency than others; and that they are well furnish'd at home, when they look so little abroad.

I shall now proceed to shew more directly, that Happiness does not consist in Abundance, or in being the Owner of large Possessions. Which I shall endeavour to prove,

I. From the Nature of the Things possess'd.

II. From the Attributes of God.

I. From the Nature of the Things possess'd, 'twill appear that this Wealth must either be,

1. *First,*

1. *First*, Hoarded up and manag'd for Encrease; or,

2. *Secondly*, It must be laid out upon a voluptuous Life; or,

3. *Thirdly*, Be made use of for Shew.

1. *First*, If 'tis hoarded and manag'd only for Encrease, 'tis hard to conceive how a Man can be the better for it: For, how can one be the better for that which he does not make use of? A covetous Man's Money might as well be lodg'd in the Mines as in his Coffers: For he receives no Advantage by having it in his Custody, excepting the fantastick Pleasure of calling it his own. He never considers, that Propriety is good for little, without applying the Things possess'd to the Advantage of our selves or others. That which we can do nothing with, be it never so valuable in it self, ought to be reckon'd no better than Lumber. Besides, the Anxiety which attends a covetous Person, is more properly his own than his Riches: For, while he sees the one at an unprofitable Distance, he feels the other got within him, to his no small Trouble;

Trouble ; disquieting himself with the Fear of losing that, which, to all significant Purposes, is lost already. Such a Person, in regard he wants as well what he has, as what he has not, Abundance does but make him the more unhappy, by encreasing his Cares upon him. And, that 'tis no Paradox to suppose a Man of this deplorable Temper, *Solomon* assures us ; and affirms, that 'twas common in his Time, tho' we have no Reason to believe it was peculiar to it. *There is an* Ecclef. vi. 1, 2. *Evil which I have seen under the Sun,* and it is common among Men ; a Man to whom God has given Wealth and Honour, yet God gives him not, or he has not, Power to eat thereof. This is Vanity, and 'tis an evil Disease. It appears therefore that Abundance, join'd with Covetousness, can never make a Man happy. Let us therefore suppose it in the

2. *Second Place*, laid out upon a voluptuous Life. Now he that manages in this Manner, seems to understand the Secret of making himself happy, better than the

the covetous Person, and to have more Spirit in him: He won't be over-aw'd with his Fortune, and stand trembling at a distance from it. No: He is resolv'd to engage it closely, and see what's to be made out of it. And as he has the Advantage of the covetous Person, so he would have of those who have less than himself, if he could make his Powers of Enjoyment proportionable to his Wealth. Could he purchase any new Senses with his Money, or enlarge those he has, and find suitable Objects for them, then indeed he would have some Advantage above his Neighbours. But since Nature is confin'd and stinted, and God is not pleas'd to make a sensual Man's Capacity equal either to his Wishes or his Wealth; how is it material whether he quenches his Thirst at the Ocean, or at the smallest Brook?

However, tho' he can't create any new Powers, yet he fancies he can please those he has, better than if he was slenderly accommodated. But, did not Appetite disable his Reason, he'd quickly find himself

self mistaken. For, let us consider him at his Table, where he places no small Part of his Happiness: And here we shall find his exquisite Variety do him more harm than Good. For, not to mention the Consequences of it, by making Appetite stronger than Digestion; not to mention this, it does upon the Course of Time, in all Probability, enfeeble the Sense also, and makes the Taste more languid, indistinct, and superficial than otherwise it would have been. To *fare sumptuously*, and to fare deliciously *every Day*, seems not the same thing; besides, he that pretends to feast always, does in reality not feast at all, because he has nothing more than an ordinary Pleasure.

But, granting the *Epicure* does enjoy himself something more in eating and drinking than others, yet presently after he finds himself the worse for it: His usual Intemperance, instead of strengthening and recreating Nature, oppresses it. It spreads a Drowsiness upon the Sense, and makes him doze away his Time, without any tolerable Command either

of Soul or Body. And as his Life is less active than that of a temperate Person, so 'tis of less Continuance: By being too much indulg'd, 'tis usually overlaid, and, like a Lamp, extinguish'd by too liberal a Supply. And though, by the Diseases and Infirmities which attend him, he may seem to make haste towards old Age, yet he seldom reaches far into it. Since therefore the Freedom the Voluptuous takes with his Abundance, rather encumbers his Happiness than advances it, I shall therefore proceed, in the

3. *Third Place*, to examine whether this Abundance succeeds better when it appears in Grandeur, and is expended upon Shew, such as magnificent Buildings, stately Gardens, rich Furniture and Equipage. Now what hinders but that a Man may perform all the Offices of Life with as much Health and Convenience, with Accommodations less glittering and expensive? If there's any thing extraordinary in these Things, the Builders and Makers should be the happy Men, because they may please themselves by seeing the
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the Effects of their Art and Ingenuity : Whereas, the Owners usually contribute nothing but their Money ; or if they happen to come in at the contriving Part, this is but a mechanick Excellence, and makes them no more, at the best, than one of the Master Workmen. Alas ! the Pleasure of this imaginary Greatness would wear off and grow stale with a short Perusal, were it not for the Satisfaction of shewing it to others : Shewing it, I say, as a Curiosity, or Things not commonly met with. Now, to be pleas'd with any thing the more because the World wants it, is but an ill-natur'd Delight ; and therefore we have little Reason to believe that God design'd such a Disposition should contribute to the making any Person happy. - And as for a numerous Retinue, I can't conceive how a Man should think his Condition advanc'd this Way : For the Persons attending him are either good or bad. If they are bad, as they will be sure to be his Vexation, so they ought to be his Discredit for keeping them : If they are good, there's no Reason

Reason he should think himself the better for another's Worth. Besides, what real Pleasure or Advantage is there in this sort of State? Can the Master's Greatness be rais'd by keeping a numerous Train of People, whom he reckons little? Not to mention that the Observance of these Domesticks is commonly paid to their Wages, and not to the Man they belong to. To which we may add, that the Judgment of such People is generally underqualify'd to pronounce upon Dignity and real Worth. Their Fancy sticks in the Glitter of the Outside, without being able to penetrate the Coarseness which may be lodg'd within. But it may be said, Is he not look'd upon as an extraordinary Person, upon account of his Attendance, and respected accordingly? To this the former Reason may answer, that those who regard him upon this account, if they are ignorant, their Respect is good for nothing, because they don't understand where it ought to be given: If they are Judicious, and then pay him a greater Respect upon the Score of his Equipage; this is a Sign they think his

his Attendance rather more considerable than himself; and then, sure, he has more reason to be humbled, than elated by it.

But Abundance, it may be reply'd, is usually ornamented with legal, as well as ceremonious Honour. Honour, it must be confess'd, when founded upon Merit, has something shining in it, because 'tis a sign of some Excellency in the Person honour'd. But when it comes from the Cradle; when 'tis purchas'd or gain'd by partial Favour, tho' it ought to be consider'd by others, tho' it ought to be regarded according to the distinctions of Law; yet, if self Love did not come into the Scale, I can not see why a Man should think himself rais'd by it. Why so? Because, as it gives him no Real Advantage either in Body or Mind, so it neither supposes Worth, nor makes any.

To what has been said upon this Head, may be added, that those who are smitten with a vainglorious Humour; those who love to appear splendid and pompous to the publick View; tho' they seem to have abundance to others, yet seldom

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have enough for their own Design. For by affecting to equalize a superior Wealth, they are apt to make their own Figure too large; which consequently gives but an odd Appearance, for want of an uniform and proportionate Greatness: And though possibly they may have so little Judgment, and so much Vanity as not to be disturbed themselves; yet they seldom fail of being ridiculous to others, by making so unhappy a Discovery as that must needs be, when a Man shews his Pride and his Poverty at once.

But tho' a Man has no Reason to conclude himself Happy, by managing his Abundance any of these three Ways already mention'd; it may however be objected that Happiness is nothing but acquiescence in our present Condition, accompanied with a vigorous Sense of the Agreeableness of it: Therefore a strong Persuasion that we are happy, infallibly makes us so. It does so, let the Reasons on which this Belief is founded be never so foreign and inconclusive.

To this it may be *answer'd*,

1. That

1. That if Happiness consists only in Fancy, a mad Man may be happy. Now to assert this, besides the Reproach it throws upon human Nature, has the Face of a Contradiction: For what looks more odd, than to affirm that Happiness may emerge from a Distemper? especially from such a Distemper as destroys the noblest Faculties a Man can be Master of?

2. It may be answer'd that a fantastick Pleasure, which we cheat ourselves into, cannot ordinarily be so strong and affecting, as that which is agreeable to the Powers of the Mind rightly constituted: For the first is a kind of flushing of the Imagination, and kept up by a confus'd superficial way of Thinking. We are pleas'd like Children, we cannot tell why; and the less we examine, the better 'tis with us. But that which is genuine, that which is founded in the Nature of Things, will stand the Test of Reason. Here we not only find our selves happy, but can demonstrate why we are so, which must needs be a new Satisfaction. But I answer,

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3. That

3. That he that believes himself happy *in the Abundance of what he possesses*, cannot continue in his Opinion of being happy in't; because he will desire an Encrease of that Abundance. For he will conclude that the more Ingredients he has to compound his Happiness, the greater it must be: Whence 'twill follow, that seeing others move in a higher Sphere, and better accommodated than himself; or at least to have something which he has not; upon this View he will grow dissatisfied with his Condition, and have a Sense of Want, by seeing himself dis-furnished of what he values and grasps at. This, as 'tis true in Principle, so it might be illustrated by the restless Projects of ambitious Princes, not to go any lower, who, had they believed they had enough, would never have given themselves and the World so much Trouble about getting more. I proceed now,

II. In the second Place to shew that Abundance is not required in order to Happiness, I mean only such a Happiness as is attainable in this Life.

And

And this I shall briefly endeavour to prove from the Attributes of God.

1. Because the greatest Part of the World can't enjoy large *Possessions*. The Earth is neither large nor fruitful enough to divide Abundance, as it's commonly understood, amongst so many Inhabitants; and if it were, this Abundance could not be enjoy'd without Pains and Industry, which takes away the Convenience, and seems to destroy the Notion of it: I say, it could not be otherwise enjoy'd, except God had pleas'd either to have made the World a Paradise, or else had created a middle sort of Beings, between Men and Brutes, to wait upon Mankind: I say, a middle sort of Beings, with suitable Organs, Instincts and Capacities, to perform all the laborious and servile Offices for us.

Since therefore the present Constitution of Providence has made general Wealth impracticable, we cannot reasonably imagine, that God, who is no Respector of Persons, should provide only for the Convenience of a few, and put the greatest Part of the World into a Condition

which must necessarily make them unhappy.

2. Wealth, tho' 'tis sometimes the Gift of Providence, and the Reward of Merit, worthily raised, and charitably employ'd; yet, to say nothing more severe, 'tis generally acquired, and managed too, by narrow and selfish Dispositions; while the more refin'd, the more generous and benevolent Part of Mankind, are too great to spend their Endeavours upon such low Projects, and too good to keep useless things to themselves, which may be so significantly bestowed upon the Necessities of their Neighbour. Now, 'tis no small Reflection upon the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to suppose him to have contriv'd the Nature of Man in such a Manner, that the Designing, the Parsimonious and Uncompassionate, should be in fairer Way of making themselves happy, than those who are of a Temper more religious, more beneficial and publick spirited. For what is such a Dispensation but a Discouragement to Virtue? What is it less than to make God contradict the

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Laws of his own blessed Nature, and reward those who are most unlike himself? For tho' the other Life will rectify these things; yet to imagine God has ordered this World for the Advantage of Circumvention and Pride, of Sordidness and Unbenevolence, as it seems inconsistent with his Attributes, so 'tis likewise contrary to his Word: For we are told, That *Godliness has the Promise of this Life*, God having so ordered his Providence that good Men, even in this World, should generally be happier, tho' not richer than others. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

From what has been discours'd upon this Subject, I shall briefly infer these three Things,

1. That we ought not to make the acquiring Wealth our main Design. St. Paul tells us, *The love of Money is the Root of all Evil*; and that *those that will be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare*; and besides the Anxiety they meet with, are often guilty of circumventing, flattering and oppressing their Neighbours. Now to what purpose should we be thus

insidious and troublesome to others? By imposing on our Neighbours, we often put the greatest Cheat upon our selves; for when we have gain'd our Point, it amounts to no more than the augmenting our Cares and our Sins, but leaves us as poor in Satisfaction as ever.

2. We ought not to grow haughty and pretending upon the Score of Wealth; 'tis no Part of our selves, and therefore we should not be elated by it. It does not unite with our Beings, nor by consequence can advance them if 'twas able: It does not enlarge our Capacities, nor prolong the Use of them; neither is it necessary to the real Conveniencies of Life: And therefore for a Man to over-look his Neighbours, because he is Master of more Clods than they, and has some shining Lumber extraordinary; this, besides the Sin, argues want of Judgment, and looks as if he was almost as heavy, and as little a-kin to Reason as that which he admires. Farther, 'tis not the having Things, tho' never so valuable, but the deserving and proper using them, which is commendable: And Riches, unless they are generously
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and charitably manag'd, a Man had better be without them; for without such a Regulation, they are very likely both to multiply and expose his Defects: And then the bulk of his Estate must make the Owner really the less.

3. Those who are not *possess'd* of *Abundance* should not be dissatisfy'd upon this Account. They ought not to murmur against Providence, nor envy their wealthier Neighbours, but enjoy their Portion with Acquiescence and Thankfulness. And this, if they consider, has no great difficulty in it; for God has made but a few Things necessary to the real Conveniencies of Life: And those which are so, are generally most common. So that if a Man's Pride does not abuse him, and unreasonably multiply his Wants, he may make himself easy in most Conditions; in Circumstances which, according to vulgar Mistake, appear slenderly furnish'd: But if he will fancy himself poor, when he may know 'tis otherwise, he must suffer for his Folly. In short, let us not think so hardly of our selves, and of God too, as to imagine he has

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made our Nature so indigent as the general Practice supposes: Let us distinguish between our real and pretended Necessities, and regulate our Desires accordingly; that is, in the Apostle's Language, *having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content.* Now to God the Father, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XI.

S. JOHN xiv. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

THE Disciples of our blessed Saviour being acquainted that their Master was about to retire from this World, and withdraw the Pleasure and Protection of his Company; they had Reason to believe, that That severe Usage our Saviour foretold, was shortly to be expected: *That they were to be hated*

hated by all Men for his Name sake ; to be cast out of the Synagogues, and that those who killed them should think they did God good Service. Thus, when this
Mal. iv. *Sun of Righteousness* was set, they might easily foresee the Sky would be overcast, and the Weather grow tempestuous : That in Case they proclaim'd their Master's Character, their Enemies would exert their Malice, and mark them for Persecution. Thus, had they been left to themselves, their Aim would have stopp'd at Security, neither would they have projected any farther than Shelter and Retirement. Now, to support their Spirits under this gloomy Prospect, and encourage them both to Publishing and Practice, our Saviour assures them, that the Dangers and Difficulties they were to encounter, should not be over-proportioned to their Strength, but as the one was extraordinary, the other should be much more so. For, notwithstanding his visible Presence should be taken from them, they should not be destitute of a Divine Power : A Power which should attest the
Truth

Truth of their Doctrine by *Signs and Wonders*, and every way fit them for the Discharge of their Office: A Power that should plead their Cause before Princes and Governors; help them to recollect their Duty, and encourage to Perseverance. These Assistances are partly implied in the Word *Paraclete* or *Comforter*, and all of them promis'd in the sending the Holy Ghost: The Holy Ghost, who was to vindicate their Innocence, and maintain their Commission; to raise their Courage, and make them proof against Danger, and put them into the Possession of such lasting Pleasures, which should be above the Power of their Enemies to deprive them of. *Your Joy*, says our Saviour, *no Man taketh from you.* Mat. xx. John xvi. 22.

And here we are not to suppose these Gifts of the Holy Ghost confin'd to the Apostles, but were to descend likewise upon their Successors, and upon all other sincere Professors of the *Christian Religion*: For our Saviour assures us, that he did not *pray only* for his Disciples, John xvii. 20. *but for all those who should believe in his*

his Name through their Word. For, notwithstanding the particular Exigence of Times, and the Office of Persons, may require different Proportions of this heavenly Assistance, yet 'tis in some measure necessary to enable us to perform our Duty. This I shall endeavour to prove both from the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and likewise from the Consideration of our own Nature, and the Circumstances we are placed in.

I. That the extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost was necessary for the planting *Christianity* at first.

II. That a supernatural Assistance, tho' not in so illustrious a Manner, is still necessary to enable us to perform the Conditions of the Gospel.

I. The extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost was necessary for the planting *Christianity* at first.

In all human Probability the *Christian Religion* had never been spread without the Lustre and Force of Miracles, which will appear from these following Considerations.

I. We

1. We know our Saviour promis'd the sending the Holy Ghost; so that if this Comforter had not been sent, our Saviour's Prediction had been unfulfill'd; for then he would have fail'd in what he had so solemnly promis'd: Now this, in all likelihood, might have so shaken the Faith of his Disciples, that they would not have thought themselves oblig'd to defend his Doctrine against so great Opposition as they were menac'd with. But admitting the Apostles had continu'd steadfast in the Belief of our Saviour's being the *Messiah*, and concluded they had misunderstood his Promise, which was not to be fulfill'd so soon as they imagin'd: Yet, till this was made good to them, they were oblig'd to publish his Doctrine no where but at *Jerusalem*. For he commands them expressly, *That they should* Acts i. 4. *not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father* concerning the sending the Holy Ghost: But had not this fallen out accordingly, *Christianity*, in all likelihood, must have died with the Apostles, in regard the Generality

ality of the *Jews* had an irreconcilable Prejudice against our Saviour; and yet the Apostles thought they were oblig'd to publish him to no other People. For, notwithstanding our Saviour commanded them to make Profelytes of all Nations, and to baptize them; yet they thought this Order reach'd only to *the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, who were scatter'd almost all the World over. That they believed the *Messiah* came only for the Advantage of their own Nation and Religion, appears plainly from St. *Peter*, who thought it unlawful to preach to *Cornelius*, or any other who were not of the Circumcision: This Mistake he lay under till it was rectify'd by a Vision from Heaven; till he receiv'd an express Command from God, to go with those *Cornelius* sent to him. But of this Argument I shall speak more in the next Consideration. At present we may observe, that the Exercise of the Apostles Office was confin'd to *Jerusalem till the Promise of the Father was receiv'd*. So that had not the Holy Ghost enlarg'd their

their Commission, they ought to have proceeded no farther.

2. Had not the Holy Ghost been sent, the Apostles had not been sufficiently qualified in Point of Knowledge and Doctrine: Our Saviour having reserv'd their fuller Instruction for that *Spirit of Truth* who was *to lead them into all Truth, and bring all Things to their Remembrance.*

John xvi.

That the Apostles, as well as the rest of the *Jews*, were under many Mistakes concerning our Religion, is plain from several Places of Scripture; particularly from *Luke xxiv.* where we find them ignorant concerning the Prophecies of the

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Messiah: They never imagin'd he was to suffer Death upon the Cross. This shocking Circumstance happening in our Saviour so contrary to their Expectations made them almost despair of any Deliverance from him. *We trusted, say they, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*: Which is as much as to say they despaired of it now.

Farther, that their Hopes expired with their Master, is manifest, because they did

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not believe his Resurrection; which that they did not do, appears from their being surprized at the News of it. As we see *N. 22. Certain Women*, say they, *made us astonished, who when they found not his Body, said, they had seen a Vision of Angels, which said that he was alive.* From whence 'tis plain, they expected nothing less than his Resurrection. This Misapprehension of the Apostles concerning our Saviour, proceeded from an Opinion generally received among the *Jews*, that the *Messiah* was to be a temporal Prince: Was to deliver them from the Servitude the *Romans* held them under; and make them a far more glorious and triumphant Nation than ever they had been. Now one would think, the private Appearance of our Saviour's Life, and the Ignominy of his Death, might have rectify'd this Notion in the Apostles, and fully satisfy'd them that *his Kingdom was not of this World*: Yet this flattering Expectation of secular Greatness was so agreeable to Flesh and Blood: This Prejudice was so strongly fix'd, by being generally

generally received, that it continued with them after our Saviour's Resurrection; as we may see by the Question they ask'd him. *Lord wilt thou at this time re-* Acts 1. 6.
store again the Kingdom to Israel? Which Mistake our Saviour did not think fit to remove at that time, but order'd them to wait at *Jerusalem* for farther Satisfaction. So that we see there was an absolute Necessity for the Mission of the Holy Ghost, to rectify those Mistakes they lay under concerning the Nature of our Saviour's Kingdom: To give them right Apprehensions of what they were to teach, and inform them more fully in the Mysteries of our Religion.

3. The Assistance of the Holy Ghost was necessary to fortify the Apostles, and make them act with Constancy and Resolution. For, had they been supported only with the Truth of their Cause, had they had nothing but their natural Abilities to rely upon, we have reason to believe the great Disproportion between their own Strength, and the Opposition they were to meet with, would have disheart-

ened them not a little. The Prospect of those great Difficulties and Persecutions which they could not but foresee would attend the preaching such Doctrine, might have made so great an Impression of Fear, as might have led them to drop their Design out of mere Despair. If it be objected that the Miracles of our Saviour's Life, of his Resurrection and Ascension were so fresh in their Minds, that the bare Recollection of what had passed would furnish them with Courage sufficient for their Employment. To this it may be answer'd, that if our Saviour's Miracles would have made the Apostles so hardy as to undertake his Cause notwithstanding the consequent Danger; then we may conceive they would not have been so far intimidated as to forsake and deny him at his Crucifixion: But this, we know, they did, notwithstanding he wrought so many Miracles among them. If 'tis said, they had not then seen his Resurrection, which was so great and unexampled a Wonder, that That alone was sufficient to secure them from relapsing in-

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to Fear and Distrust. To this I answer, that tho' they had not seen our Saviour raise himself, yet they had seen him raise *Lazarus*, who had lain four Days in the Grave. Besides, in strict Reasoning, one Miracle is not greater than another; because all Miracles exceed the Strength of natural Causes, and therefore require a Power paramount to Nature: A Power, which is able to check its most establish'd Laws, and alter the Course of things at Pleasure. Therefore, neither in respect of the Grounds of our Belief, nor in respect of God, to whose Omnipotency all things are easy alike, upon neither of these Accounts can one Miracle be said to be greater than another; and therefore ought not to be believed sooner: And, for the same Reason, neither can the Frequency of them add any Force to their Authority. The Testimony of one Miracle is as strong as a Thousand, provided 'tis clear and convincing to the Senses, and carries the Marks of a supernatural Cause in it. Since, therefore, the unquestion'd Miracles our Saviour wrought among his

Disciples in his Life, could not make them hardy enough to stand by him at his Death, 'tis highly probable the following Wonders of his Resurrection and Ascension, tho' mightily surprizing, would not have raised them to such a pitch of Resolution, as was necessary for so dangerous an Employ as they were to engage in. 'Tis highly probable, I say, they would have wanted Resolution, had they not been supported by the miraculous Workings and Consolations of the Holy Spirit. Such inward Reinforcement enabled them not only to work Wonders upon others, but made them experimentally sensible of the divine Influence upon themselves. They found their Minds enrich'd with a new Stock of unstudied and supernatural Knowledge; and their Tongues able to express it in all the Languages they conversed with. When by these infallible Signs they knew this *Comforter* had made his Abode with them, we find them remarkable for a much greater Presence of Mind. Now they quit their Retirement, frequent the most publick

publick Places, and speak boldly in the Defence of their Doctrine. 'Tis strange to observe, with what a generous Assurance they behaved when they were summoned before Persons of the first Quality and highest Authority; with what freedom they pleaded their Master's Innocence and proclaimed his Honour: They openly charg'd the Court with the Blood of the most righteous and greatest Person. They told them to their Faces, that *they had killed the just One* who was now *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*, and that *there was Salvation in no other Name under Heaven*. Now if we look upon them barely in themselves, we shall find them under all the Disadvantages imaginable. They were Men inconsiderable both in Fortune and Interest. They never acted in publick Stations, nor used to converse with the *grand Monde*; and therefore must be unpractised in that Address and graceful Application; unpractised, I say, in those Qualities which give Assurance and procure Respect in such Places. They had no Subtilty of reasoning,

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soning, nor Flourishes of *Rhetorick* to trust to. One would think their coming before so solemn an Appearance was enough to have overfet them. That the Pomp and Grandeur of the Court would have struck them mute, and made them drop their Cause. But this was not all; they knew their Defence, was of the most unacceptable provoking Nature imaginable; that they could not prove themselves innocent, without making their Judges guilty of the most horrid Murder that was ever committed. Yet all these Disadvantages did not in the least Discourage them from maintaining their Cause, and pursuing their Design; though they were *streightly charged not to teach any more in the Name of Jesus*. But these Menacings signified nothing. For now they found a happy Alteration in themselves. They were intimately sensible that their Understandings were improved, and their Spirits fortified far above their usual Degrees: And that our Saviour, according to his Promise, had given them

Luke xxi. 15. *Wisdom and Courage which none of their Adver-*

Adversaries were able to gainsay, or resist Now they gloried in Tribulation: They neither valued the Censure nor the Punishment of the *Jewish Sanhedrim*. They looked upon publick Disgrace as an Honour, *and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for their Master's sake.* 'Tis wonderful to consider how exempt they were from Fear, and how much above those Threatnings which over-awe the most of Mankind: With what Unconcernedness they exposed themselves, and with what Bravery they suffered. Neither were they remarkable only for their Resolution, but for the Miracles which they wrought upon others. Indeed such extraordinary Assistances were necessary for the first planting of Christianity: For *this Sect*, as the *Jews* told *St. Paul*, *was every where spoken against.* To settle such a Religion, must needs be a very difficult Task; where the strongest Prejudices and Vices were to be encounter'd. The Publishers of it were to convince an obstinate, and reform a debauch'd World; and over and above,

lay under Discountenance and Persecution from the civil Powers. The Religion of the *Jews* and *Heathens* was in present Possession, and had the Prescription of many Ages; and besides, gave a much greater Freedom than the *Christian*. The *Heathen* Nations had Antiquity and Authority, the Protection of the State, and oracular Responces to plead for their Errors; and, which has no small Weight, had strong Inclinations to wish them true. And since the ordinary Passage to Men's Minds was thus barr'd, was there not need of a divine Power to display it self, and interpose for the Happiness of Mankind? 'Tis almost impossible to suppose, that the bare Reasoning of the Apostles should have convinced their Hearers, if their Arguments had not been enforc'd by something extraordinary. The World would never have believ'd such unpromising Persons as they were, to have been the Ambassadors of Heaven, if they had not seen their Commission seal'd by a Miracle. Of the Necessity of such Credentials, the Apostles were very sensible;
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and therefore desire God that he would *stretch forth his Hand to heal, and that Signs and Wonders might be done in the Name of Jesus*: Which Request of theirs ^{Acts iv. 3c.} being granted in a most remarkable Manner, they were then fully qualify'd for the successful discharge of their Office. For, when they were heard to speak with Tongues they never learn'd; when they could cure Diseases or inflict them, kill or make alive, as they thought fit; when they seem to have the Power of Life and Death deliver'd into their Hands, and to carry a kind of Omnipotence about them; This must needs draw the Eyes of all People, and procure them an unusual Esteem wherever they went. When such obscure Persons were observ'd to change the most establish'd Laws of the Creation, and make Nature almost over again; this gave a mighty Alarm to the World, this made them shake off their Lethargy, and awaken'd 'em to a serious Attention to what was deliver'd. They rationally concluded, that Doctrine could have no vulgar Meaning, which was so wonder-

wonderfully attested; and that those Truths must be of more than ordinary Concern, which stood recommended by so visible a Countenance of a divine Power.

Now, after the Doctrine of our Saviour was sufficiently confirmed; after the civil Magistrates were converted, and became *Defenders of the Faith*; when this surprising Progress was made, God withdrew the extraordinary Assistance of his Spirit: For when the Prejudices of Education were worn off, and the *Christian Religion* stood upon equal Terms with the *Heathens*; under this Situation, its own rational Force would give it an Advantage. Thus the Balance would be turn'd, and all well-dispos'd Minds would come in without the Assistance of Miracles.

But here, we are not to suppose the Holy Ghost has wholly withdrawn himself from the Church. Tho' God has recall'd the more visible Signs of his Presence, yet he still continues his Influence as certainly, tho' not so sensibly, as formerly: This is evident from the Scripture, where 'tis said, *Those that are the*
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Rom. viii.
14.

Sons of God, are led by his Spirit: And that *those who have not the Spirit of God are none of his:* So that a Man cannot be reckon'd a good *Christian*, except he is under the Government and Direction of a divine Influence. This Spirit is affirm'd to be given in Baptism, and therefore that Sacrament is call'd *the Laver of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Tit. lii. 5. And that this Renewing was not of an extraordinary Nature, and peculiar to the Age of Miracles, is plain from *Acts ii.* where *St. Peter* tells them, *This Promise was made to them and to their Children, and to those that were afar off, even as many as God should call;* which shews that all succeeding Generations were to have an Interest in it.

Now we know the miraculous Powers of the Holy Ghost have ceased long since, and therefore his ordinary Assistance must be meant. Neither is the perpetual Continuance of this Assistance more apparent than the Necessity of it: Which was the second Thing propounded.

II. Indeed, if we consider that human

man Nature continues the same, that we have all the Weakness and Passions and Extravagancies of former Ages about us, that the Temptations to a wicked Life are as frequent and ensnaring; we shall find that we have as much need of a divine Assistance as ever. Nay, it seems to be more necessary now, because Miracles are ceased: There is now no Flashing from the Sky, no extraordinary Appearances to remind us of the Certainty of Religion, and make us consider the weighty Consequences of it. That the Assistance of the Holy Ghost is necessary to enable us to perform our Duty, I shall briefly prove from the Doctrine of the Scriptures, and from the strong Inclination of our Nature to that which is evil. The principal Virtues of the *Christian* Religion, are ascrib'd in Scripture to the Operation of the Holy Ghost; as we may see, *Gal. v. 22.* Where Meekness, Temperance, and other holy Dispositions are called, *the Fruits of the Spirit.* And elsewhere the same Apostle affirms, that *we are not sufficient of our selves to do any*

any thing, but our Sufficiency is of God.

Our Saviour tells his Disciples, *Without* John xv.

me ye can do nothing. Now this was^s

spoken to those who were Believers already. But notwithstanding they had the Advantage of believing aright in many Things, yet their Faith had been unfruitful, and consequently dead, had it not been kept up and actuated by the Holy Spirit.

If 'tis objected, that the Arguments which prove the divine Original of Christianity, are so convincing, and the Reasonableness of its Doctrine so unquestionable, that a bare propounding them to our Understandings, is a sufficient Recommendation, without the interposing of any extraordinary Assistance. To this it may be answer'd, that did Men always examine Things with Freedom and Impartiality, did they always act up to the Height of what their Reason had convinc'd them, then a bare Representation of Religion was enough for Belief and Practice. But when we consider what Blindness there is in our Understandings, what Perverseness in our Wills, how we

are often entangled with Prejudices, and byass'd with sensual Affections, we shall find that bare Nature is very insufficient to conduct us to Truth and Virtue. If we consider, that as Men are willing to believe any thing upon slight Proofs which is agreeable to their Wishes, so they are hardly brought to yield their Assent to unacceptable Truths; to Truths, which rise up in Opposition to their strongest Inclinations. Now the Doctrines of *Christianity* pressing hard against favourite Vices, makes Men not willing to allow it a fair Examination; and to catch at any Shadow of a Reason for Disproof. Besides, in regard we cannot attend to all things at once, when our Thoughts are so busily employ'd about this World, we should be in great Danger to forget the other; in great Danger, I say, unless we were often admonish'd of our Duty by a more vigilant Reason, and aided in the Performance by a greater Strength than our own. From whence it follows, that a bare Proposal of the Reasons of *Christianity*, are not sufficient for Practice, unless

unless they are fortify'd, and the Weight of Things press'd by a supernatural Power. 'Tis this divine Power that effectually convinces us of the Vanity of the World below, and of the mighty Interest we have in that above. This animates our Resolutions, regulates our Choice, and sublimates our Pleasures. By this Assistance, Reason stands upon its Guard, and the Affections are call'd off from Folly. Without this inward Teaching, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, would be much an Over-match for the best Instructions: Without this, written Revelation would fall short, and the Ministrations of Men prove ineffectual. For tho' St. Paul *may plant and Apollos water*, I Cor. iii. yet 'tis God that gives the *Encrease*.^{6.}

The good Things of this Life are present and palatable, certain to Possession, and proportion'd to Appetite; whereas the other World is out of View; and the Satisfaction of it too fine for Vice and corrupt Nature to take hold of: Besides, things unknown and untried are not apt to make so strong an Impression. Thus it

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too frequently happens, that Men prefer *Things temporal* to *Things eternal*, tho' there's no proportion in the Value. Hence it is, that Reason and Proof can't always carry the Point, and that our Affections are too strong for our Understandings. Nothing but a supernatural Force can overbear the Prejudices of Flesh and Blood ; nothing can reform the Will, and mollify the Heart, but he that made it.

John v.
44.

No Man, says our Saviour, can come to me, unless the Father draw him. And, as was observ'd, without me ye can do nothing. But when this divine Succour interposes, the Adversary retreats, the Body of Sin is broken, and the Difficulties of Nature give way. Then the Deaf hear, and the Obdurate relent: *The Mountains melt like Wax at the Presence of the Lord, who turns the hard Rock into a standing Water, and the Flint Stone into a springing Well.* The strongest Prepossessions are master'd, the Will made pliable to Virtue, and the barren grow fruitful to good Works : And thus *Judgment runs down like Water, and Righteousness*

Psal. cxiv.
7, 8.

ousness like a mighty Stream. From this ^{Amos. v.} Consideration St. Paul exhorts the *Philippians* ^{24.} to use their utmost *Diligence*, and then they need not question the Success; for God was ready to step in for their Relief, and supply the Weakness of their Nature. 'Tis God, says he, *that* ^{Phil. ii.} *worketh in you both to will and to do.* ^{13.}

Having now proved the Necessity of God's Grace, and that he has promised to continue it in his Church to the World's end; I shall only enlarge a little upon this Head in the following Inference, *viz.*

That the Consideration of the Divine Assistance ought to be a great Encouragement to us in the Performance of our Duty. This will appear by a more particular Account of the Nature of it. Now 'tis the Grace of God which awakens the Powers of the Soul, brings it to Recollection, and makes it reflect upon those things which relate to her future Condition. Thus in the case of *Lydia*, ^{Acts xvi.} 'tis said *the Lord open'd her Heart, that* ^{14.} *she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.* 'Tis plain therefore from

Scripture, that 'tis by this supernatural Principle, the Mind is brought to a grave and considerative Temper. This disposes it seriously to ponder the Hopes and Fears of Religion, and not to live at Random, without any Care of what becomes of us hereafter. The Holy Spirit reduces our Thoughts to Indifferency and Temper, and helps us to hold the Balance even. It inclines us to examine the Weight and Consequences of things, and give a just Allowance to a future Interest. It disposes us to consider that we shall be capable of Happiness or Misery to all Eternity ; that Pain will be as troublesome to us, and Pleasure as acceptable, Millions of Ages hence, as they are now : And that we ought to make a Provision for the longest Duration of our Being : And not grasp at any Satisfaction inconsistent with the Hopes of a greater. 'Tis the Illumination of this Spirit which frees the Understanding from Ignorance and Prejudice, and enables it to view the full Deformity of Sin : By which we may be convinced that Vice is of a dishonourable,

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as well as of a destructive Nature ; that *the Pleasures of Sin* are scandalous and mean, and ought to be scorn'd by a great, as well as dreaded by a thinking Mind. 'Tis the Grace of God which enforces the Reasonableness of Religion upon our Consciences ; and shews us the great Obligation the divine Goodness has laid on us to observe his Commands : That we may admire his infinite Love in sending our Saviour, and gratefully consider the Extent of his Mercy to all Mankind : The wretched Servitude the World was under before, and the glorious Condition 'tis now made capable of. This is to *comprehend, with all Saints, the Breadth, and Length, and Height, and Depth*, which the Apostle prayed that God would enable the *Ephesians* to do. 'Tis this Ephes. iii. 18. divine Influence which prompts us to view the Loveliness of Virtue, which displays its charming Nature, and gives us a just Esteem for the Pleasures of a good Conscience. It excites the native Generosity of our Minds, and enflames us with the Love of Goodness ; makes us admire

a brave Action in others, and rise up to it our selves: And therefore, 'tis Part of St. Paul's Prayer for the *Philippians*, that they might *approve those things that are excellent*. From hence it is that good Men derive their Constancy and Perseverance. This Comforter *stablishes, strengthens, settles* them in their holy Profession, and makes them steddy and unalterable in what they have wisely resolved. He it is that raises them to that immoveable Greatness which makes them Proof against Adversity, and fear nothing but doing an ill Action. So that, as the Apostle speaks, they are in *all things more than Conquerors, being strengthen'd with Might by his Spirit in the inner Man*. This Assistance is called *the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord*. To teach us that it reaches to all Cases, and provides for all Exigencies. In short, all spiritual Blessings which we pray for, come from this Fountain; the very Notion of Prayer supposes thus much. For,
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if we could supply our selves, our Prayers to God were needless and unaccountable. And is it not a great Happiness to have such a Protection? What higher Encouragement can we desire, than to be under the Conduct of so gracious, so mighty a Spirit? What can be a stronger Incitement to our Duty than the Sense of such an Assistant, who has undertaken to support our Weakness, to improve our Reason, and perfect our Nature in every thing honourable and virtuous? There's nothing that's truly worthy and great in the Mind of Man, but lies within our Reach: And thus we may be undisturb'd and happy as often as we please; for now the Wisdom and Power of an infinite Being are engaged for us, and are in a manner our own: For that Power and Assistance which we are sure of for asking, may, if we please, be as beneficial to us, as if it were derived from our selves. Now, God, we know, has promised *his Holy Spirit* to those that ask him. Luke xi. 13. The Belief and Experience of this Assistance drew that great Expression from

Philip. iv. 11, 13. *St. Paul, That he had learned to be content in whatsoever State he was: And that he could do all things thro' Christ that strengthen'd him.*

But then to make our selves capable of so great a Blessing, 'tis our Duty to be careful not to *grieve this Holy Spirit*, lest we provoke him to depart from us. We must take up the Psalmist's Resolution *to walk with a perfect Heart, and to set no wicked thing before our Eyes.* We must endeavour to prepare our Minds for so glorious an Inhabitant; We must cherish and improve all worthy and religious Thought, and yield our selves obedient to his holy Conduct. Which if we do, God has promised that *his Grace shall be sufficient for us*; that he will reward our pious Inclinations with greater Attainments of Virtue here, and of Glory hereafter. To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us, &c.

SERMON



SERMON XII.

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St. JAMES i. 13, 14.

*Let no Man say when he is tempted,  
I am tempted of God, for God  
cannot be tempted with Evil, nei-  
ther tempteth he any Man; but  
every Man is tempted when he is  
drawn away of his own Lust, and  
enticed.*



ALL Laws, whether Humane or  
Divine, signify nothing with re-  
spect to Government, as long  
as those for whom they are made,  
believe them impracticable: For under  
this

this Persuasion they will not only be unconcern'd at the breaking them; but never use their Endeavours, nor try their Strength, whether they can reach up to the Command or not. Now wicked Men, who can't reconcile their Affections to the Duties of Religion, are willing to fanfy themselves under this Incapacity; as if God did not proportion his Laws to the Faculties of his Creatures, but design'd them rather as an Exercise of Authority, than a Rule of Action. And when they have once laid the Blame of their Disobedience on the Defect of their Nature, they think they are safe enough; they imagine they have no less than the Justice of God for their Security: That he will not be so hard a Master, as *to reap where he has not strewed*, nor condemn for Impossibilities of his own making. Now that no Man might fix himself in a wicked Life by such a fatal Mistake, and aggravate his Crimes by accusing God Almighty; the Apostle expressly affirms, that God is far from placing us in an unavoidable State of Sin; that giving the

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least Countenance to it, is utterly inconsistent with the Notion of such a Being. And therefore *Let no Man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any Man: But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed.*

But because God is said to tempt *Abraham* Gen. xlii. when he commanded him to offer up his Son *Isaac*, therefore it will not be improper to consider the Importance of the Word.

First, therefore by tempting, is meant trying the Temper and Inclinations of Men, to see how they stand affected, and which way they will turn when put to the Test. Thus God dealt with *Abraham* in the forementioned Place; and after the Experiment commends the Steadiness of his Faith. *Now I know that thou fearest God, in that thou hast not withheld thine only Son from me.* If 'tis objected, that God is thoroughly acquainted with the Mind of Man, and foresees how he will manage himself upon all Emergencies, and



and therefore can't be said to tempt him for the Discovery of that which he knows already.

To this the Answer is plain, that God does not do this for his own Information, but to shew the Integrity of his Servants; which, as 'tis useful to others, so 'tis satisfactory to themselves. For no Man can tell the Strength of a good Resolution, till he is put to the Proof of it. For tho' he may be assur'd God will not let him miscarry, if he does his best, yet the doing this, depends on his Will, which is a mutable and uncertain Principle.

A second Design of tempting, is to improve the Virtue of the Person tempted. 'Tis Labour and Opposition, which perfects Habits, and enlarges the Faculties of Body and Mind. For this puts Nature upon its Guard, awakens all its Powers, and makes it exert, to encounter the Difficulty. And because Afflictions are accounted the greatest Temptations, both *Abraham* and *Job* may be said to be tempted in this Sense by God Almighty; that their Patience, their Resignation,  
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and Reliance, might be heighten'd, and made more illustrious by such a Tryal.

A third End of Temptation is to make the Person worse, to lay a Snare for his Innocence, and betray him into Sin; in which Sense, God never tempts any Man. For how should God, to whose Nature all moral Impurity is the greatest Contradiction, incline any Person to the doing that which he abhors? How should he, who loves his Creatures, put them upon doing such Actions which are displeasing to him, or destructive to themselves? To threaten Sin with [no less than eternal Punishment, and at the same time encourage it under-hand, is not reconcileable with Goodness, or Justice. For to circumvent, to be insidious, to delight in the Misery of others, are certain Signs of a mean and depraved Disposition; and consequently the Perfection of God's Nature makes it impossible for him to do any of these Things. For being infinitely great and happy in his own Omnipotence, he needs not have Recourse to any indirect Means, to make  
himself

himself considerable or secure : And farther, being infinitely just, 'tis impossible for him to have any such unaccountable Desire. But tho' 'tis never so plain, that Light can't be the Origin of Darkness, nor Iniquity be produc'd or countenanc'd by a righteous Being, yet the Perverseness and Corruption of Mens Minds is such, that they are not afraid to charge the Irregularity of their Actions upon God himself, that so they may sin with the more Indisturbance and Satisfaction. It were almost endless to reckon up all the Excuses wicked Men make for themselves ; I shall only mention those that are most remarkable, and which seem to carry the greatest Weight in them.

*First*, Some People charge their Vices upon their being united to a Body in general.

To which it may be answered that a Body is no more capable of sinning than a Stock or Stone. 'Tis a senseless inanimate Thing, without any manner of Thought or Apprehension ; and therefore can't be under the Direction and Censure of a Law. But Sin is seated in the  
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rational Part, and supposes Judgment and Consent: But these are Faculties the Body has nothing to do with; and therefore 'tis no more capable of sinning now, than when 'tis laid in the Grave. Therefore the Apostle tells us, that at the last Day, every Man must *receive* not according to *what the Body has done*, but according <sup>2 Cor. v. 10.</sup> to *what he has done in the Body*.

But it may be said, that though the Body is not endowed with Sense and Understanding, yet its Union with the Soul, gives it a great Ascendant. For don't we find by Experience, that according to the Indisposition or good Constitution of the Body, our Passions are diversify'd both in Nature and Degree; and even our Reason is sprightly or languishing; insomuch that our Thoughts are not the same in a cloudy, as in a clear Day?

To which it may be answered, that though the Body has an Influence on the Mind; though it gives it many affecting Notices of its own State and Alterations, yet let the Ferment of the Blood, and the Motion of the Spirits be never so cross  
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and surprizing, (Phrenzy and Lethargy excepted;) though the Harmony of the Humours may be very much disturb'd; yet this does neither extinguish our Understanding, nor force the Liberty of our Will: The Mind is not so much overcast, but that it may see the Difference between Good and Evil; and though a Man may be strongly urg'd to act one way rather than another, yet if he reflects and strives, he'll find a Principle within him, which can check the Motion, and deny the Importunity of his Senses. Indeed, if God had interwoven any fatal Principle of Defection in our earthy Part; had he thrown any Infection into our Blood, and tied up the Soul to the Laws and Impressions of the Body, then we should have some Reason to shift off the Faults from our selves, and lay them upon a higher Cause. But now, since the Soul is Master of its own Consent; since 'tis the Companion, and not the Slave of *Matter*, we ought to lay the Blame of our Miscarriages on our selves.

Secondly,

2. It may be answered that some Sins have little or no Dependence on the Body; such as Malice, Revenge, Envy and Pride: These Vices we might be guilty of, though we were disengaged from all bodily Commerce, and had nothing but Spirit about us. Those who make this Objection seem to desire an Angelical Nature; but if they had it, that would not secure them without Care. For God never created any Angels (that we know of) in an impeccable Condition; some of them we are sure, (and those none of the lowest Order,) have *left their first Station, and therefore are reserved* Jude 6. *under Chains of Darkness.*

*Secondly,* 'Tis usual with Men to charge their Sins on their particular Temper. The cholerick Person pretends he has too much Heat and Motion put into his Constitution: That the Tide may as well be stemm'd, as the Current of his Passion, when it rises on a sudden Provocation. And to affirm, that all this Commotion lyes under the arbitrary Check of Reason, is, in effect, to say, that a Man may

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lay a Tempest with thinking, and put out a Fire by the Strength of a Wish. The timorous Person confesses, that he is overaw'd into many Things which he does not like: But the Sense of immediate Danger hags his Imagination, and raises such a frightful Idea, that he seldom has the Courage to think of Resistance; and when he happens to come towards Resolution, he finds his Spirits are not active enough to execute; but he is always deserted by the Chilness and Flegm, and cold Temper of his Body.

The Licentious and Dissolute are apt to say, that they are carry'd to Intemperance, by the Keeness and Vigour of their Senses, by the good Nature and Compliance of their Blood: Whereas had they not this unhappy Byass, they would be as regular and mortify'd as the best. But their Temper was not of their own making; and they think it hard to be accountable for its Miscarriages.

In answer to this,

I. It must be granted, that Temper does make Men inclinable to some Vices; but  
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then it does not force them : Care, and the Assistance of God's Grace (which is never denied to those that beg it) are sufficient to control these Propensities to Sin. To do this, is the principal Employment of our Reason ; a Charge as well honourable as laborious ; God designing this Contention of the *Flesh and Spirit*, to improve our Virtue, and make us capable of a greater Reward. And that the latter might not have too much Disadvantage, God has order'd our Frame in such a manner, that our Bodies are incapable of acting viciously in our Infancy, nor seem inclinable to it. The Disorders which they prompt us to, don't discover themselves till our Mind is able to grapple with them : For by that time our Senses begin to be troublesome, Reason is attain'd to a considerable Height ; and, by the Improvement of Experience and Education, clearly understands, that, in Point of Prudence and Security, 'tis bound not to give way to every thing the Senses demand. Indeed, if the Body was grown up to its full Strength and Vigour, before



it received its Companion : If the Soul was not infus'd till 'twas thus far behind-hand, it might be much over match'd : For if it enter'd a Blank, as 'tis most likely it does, it would want the Knowledge of Law and Duty, of which there would be immediate Use. And besides, the Impressions of the Body being so strong and impetuous, it would be difficult (though not impossible) for such a raw unexperienc'd Spirit to over-rule them. But now since the Mind enters the Lists upon equal Terms; since it has almost all along been able to observe the Motions, and check the Irregularities of the Body; since 'tis acquainted with the Measures of governing it self, the Difficulty of the Case is much lessen'd: As Things stand now, Men should be asham'd to alledge the Pretence of an unfortunate Temper: The mere Sense of Honour, one would think, was sufficient to make them lay aside so uncreditable an Excuse. For, what a scandalous Meanness is it, to let the rational and immortal Soul, which was made for Government and Empire,

to be trampled on, and as it were led in Triumph by unconscious and stupid *Matter*? How can we maintain the Dignity of our Kind, and justify our Claim to a rational Nature, if we suffer our selves to be moved, like Machines, with a foreign Motion; and let our Passions and Actions too, lie at the Mercy of every insulting Object of Sense? Some Creatures, we know, delight in wallowing in the Mire, and no doubt 'tis the Habit of their Body which makes them do it. Now, if this be such an over-ruling Principle in Men, that there's no contesting with it, we may put the Sceptick's Question in *Ecclesiastes*, *What Pre-eminence hath a Man above a Beast*? To what Purpose serve Reason and Understanding, except it be a Privilege to be conscious of its own Weakness and Slavery; and that without the least Prospect of Remedy?

But besides, this Pretence arraigns all humane Laws, and taxes all Courts of Judicature with Tyranny and Injustice: For why may not a Man that is punished

for stealing, alledge that the Habit of his Body is so unfortunately overbalanc'd, that it is not in his Power to let his Neighbour's Property alone? Why therefore should such a Person suffer? For if the Force of Temper be so unconquerable, why should it not be allow'd in one Case, as well as in another?

2. It may be answered, that we often reckon that to our Tempers, which proceeds from Carelessness, ill Custom, or ill Principles. Thus the intemperate Person, when he has habituated himself to Excess, and drown'd that Constitution he came into the World with, complains of the Difficulties of his own making; as if the Measures of Sobriety were so scanty and disproportion'd to the Necessities of Nature, that a Man can't be just to his Mind and Body at the same time; nor maintain the Serviceableness of the one, without disordering the Reason of the other. The licentious Person fulfies his Imagination with intemperate Freedoms, paints a criminal Object with Heightnings, and frequents the most insnaring

snaring Company; and instead of Reserve and Discipline, lets loose the Reins to Folly, *runs into excess of Riot, and strengthens himself in his Wickedness*: And when he has laid so many Plots against his Virtue, and been at so much Pains to subdue his Reason, and silence his Conscience, he lays the Blame upon the irresistible Force of his Senses. He grants, indeed, the seventh Commandment to be very reasonable, and that Society can scarce subsist with a general Neglect of it: But he is thrown upon such particular Disadvantages by Nature, that 'tis impossible up to come up to the Rigour of it. Thus when Men have betray'd their own Innocence, accusom'd themselves to a vicious Course, and are resolv'd to pursue it, they take Sanctuary in the unavoidable Weakness of Nature, and so leave Providence to answer for it: Whereas such Practices and Evasions as these, quite alter and unmake the original Constitutions of our Bodies. Such ill Conduct as this, makes us much more dependant on our Senses than God ever



design'd : This creates new Desires, and renders those which are natural much more violent and unmanageable.

Thus likewise Men are apt to impute the History of their wicked Lives to their Temper ; whatever they have done, or are inclin'd to, which their Reason tells them is unaccountable or flagitious, this they presently throw off from their Conscience upon their *Flesh* and *Blood*, because they find it lyes easiest there. One Man has engaged in a Quarrel, and been successful in it ; and upon this falls in Love with this barbarous Custom, and continues in it from the Prospect of pretended Honour. And to reconcile himself to this Frenzy, fancies he is made up of different Ingredients from other slegmatick Mortals : That he has an Over-Balance of Fire in his Composition, and that some irresistible Power has made him fit for nothing but Rencounters and Bloodshed. Another has a Dispute about Property, and happens to prove victorious : Several lucky Events of this kind encourage him to be litigious upon the  
least

least Occasion, till at last he grows so vain as to imagine, that he is fatally determined by the special Frame of his Temper, to be always molesting and disquieting his Neighbours: Whereas, all these Faults are derived from nothing, but the Pride, the Envy, or Covetousness of the Man's Mind. These scandalous and fordid Passions have been used to govern so long, they have been pamper'd, and inflam'd, with so many unlawful Satisfaction, that they are now grown too stiff to be controlled. Now, he must comply, tho' push'd upon things never so unjust and inhuman: Not that 'tis impossible to break loose from an ill Custom; but habitually wicked Men are very hardly persuaded to baulk a Pleasure, and give themselves the trouble of checking a strong Desire.

3. It may be answered, that some Persons are guilty of almost all manner of Sins, which cross their *Constitution* as well as their *Duty*: For Constitution generally lies one way, and can't press Men upon so many Vices, which disagree in  
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their Nature. Those who are apt to be frightened out of good Resolutions, at the Apprehension of Danger, and charge their Inconstancy upon the Timorousness of their Disposition; these Persons, sure, can't excuse their cholerick Heats upon the same Grounds: They must not pretend that the Fervour and Generousness of their Blood over-bears their Reason, and won't suffer them to put up a Provocation; for no Temper blows hot and cold at this rate: And yet there have been some such Persons in the World, both cowardly and cholerick; bold and desperate in a bad, but very heartless in a good Cause, fight like Gladiators in a Duel, and run away in a Field, where their Prince and Country require Resolution.

'Tis not unusual to observe the Ambitious at their first setting out, to keep their Passions under strict Discipline; but when once they have gain'd their Point, to dissolve in Luxury and Pleasure; as if Success had given them a Nature perfectly different from what they had before. 'Tis no rare thing to find Persons unreasonable

ble and screwing in their Exactions, and yet profuse in their Expences; covetous and prodigal at the same time; and yet that Constitution which is a Byass to the one, is a Bar to the other. And some have run through the whole Circle of Vice: But if Temper were the over-ruling Principle, such universal Sinners would require a great many distinct and particularly formed Bodies, to bear up against Contrariety, and make room for their Impieties to range in.

4. It may be answer'd that those Difficulties, which they pretend invincible, have been master'd by Persons of the same Temper with themselves: People of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions, have been virtuous, where they have had the strongest Inclination of Temper to the contrary. God has not calculated his Laws for any particular Climate or Disposition: For though some Virtues may be more commendable in some Countries or Constitution than in another, yet they are impossible in none. Religion will thrive in any Soil, if it be but cultivated with



with Care and Prudence. 'Tis true, because Temper inclines Men to some Sins more than others, therefore we should study the Tendency of our Inclinations, and be very circumspect in the Management of them. We should implore the Assistance of Grace, and summon in the Aids of Reason to suppress them; we should make use of the Motives of Shame and Honour, of Punishments and Rewards, and apply corporal Discipline, as the Occasion requires; and when this is done, we need not question the Success, but that *the Grace of God*, according to his Promise, *will be sufficient for us*.

*Thirdly*, Some People charge their Faults upon the ill Company they are forc'd to keep: They grant they might be able to conquer their own Inclinations, if they had none to deal with but themselves; if they could chuse either the Convenience of Solitude or virtuous Society, they think their Duty would be no such impracticable Thing. But since the World is so vitious, and every one has not the Liberty of running away from it, 'tis as  
hard

hard to be innocent among so many Temptations and wicked Examples, as 'tis for a Man to converse with those that have the Plague, and be free from Infection. To this I answer,

That if God had oblig'd us to keep wicked Company, our Excuse had some Pretence: But we know we are enjoyn'd the contrary, *not to walk in the Council of the Ungodly, nor stand in the Way of Sinners.* For though such Persons are not to be hated; though they are to be treated with common Civility upon an occasional Meeting, yet they are not to be taken into the Intimacies of Friendship and Conversation: For, setting apart the Danger of such a Familiarity, 'tis plain that those who seek it, are depraved already. For he who has any true Veneration for God Almighty, can't take any Pleasure in hearing him insulted and contemn'd. No Man that knows his Friend to be a Person of Honour and Worth can see him mal-treated without Uneasiness and Resentment, especially when the Affront is given by  
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an ungrateful inconsiderable Wretch: The Application is easy, and needs not be spoken out. But notwithstanding the Trouble and Danger of ill Company, it may be urg'd, some Persons cannot avoid it. For Instance, Servants are forc'd to live with vitious Masters; sometimes they are fixed there by the Imprudence of others, being not at their own Disposal, and in this Case, they can't in Justice go off, till the Contract is satisfy'd; and if they could, it sometimes happens so, that they can't provide for themselves elsewhere. To which it may be returned, that those who are placed in such Circumstances by the Indiscretion of others, and have not the Liberty of a Removal; they, I say, need not question but that Care and Religion will secure their Innocence. That God will not let them miscarry in a Danger which was none of their own chusing, nor suffer them to be *tempted above what they are able*: They need not doubt this, if they beg his Assistance by frequent and devout Application. But then if they are at their own  
Liberty,

Liberty, who that's of a virtuous Disposition, would *dwell with* Mesech, and *have his Habitation among the Tents of* Kedar. For to say they can't be provided for elsewhere, is generally a Mistake: For we know they seldom want Opportunities of planting themselves in less dangerous Ground, though possibly with Abatement in Interest: But certainly he that owns the Name of a Christian, will easily discern, he ought not to prefer an inconsiderable Advantage here, to the securing his Virtue, and everlasting Condition.

But it may be answer'd farther, that those exceptionable Masters, upon whom the Objection is chiefly founded, are unwilling their Servants should imitate their Example; therefore they can't either pretend a Force, or expect any Favour by such a Conformity. Such Persons seem rather desirous to engross their Faults to themselves: This, they conceive is the Way to keep up the Reputation of their Wickedness; therefore they are by no Means pleased to see the Quality of their Vices made vulgar, and lessen'd by the  
Practice



Practice of those who are so much their Inferiours.

If 'tis objected, that sometimes Duty and Necessity forces them upon dangerous Society: This may be alledg'd in the Case of Children or indigent Relations: But here it may be answer'd, that Parents are seldom so monstrously wicked, as to command Irregularity, and make Vice an Instance of Duty and Observance: This they will be apt to forbear out of mere Interest and Policy, for fear of disposing their Children to a Revolt, and weakening their Obligation to Obedience: For this Bond to Submission and Regard, they know, has its main Strength from Religion. But if they are so far lost to Goodness and Sense, as to command any thing unlawful, we know in such Cases, whom we are to obey, *God rather than Men.* So likewise, if Relations will discard us, unless we earn our Bread by Compliance, and giving in to their Vices; if we have no other Retreat, we had better cast ourselves upon Providence, than run upon  
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endless Ruin, by subsisting upon so mean, and so criminal a support.

*Fourthly*, Some Persons pretend their Situation and Profession obliges them to strain and transgress: That they can't maintain themselves in any creditable Circumstances, without bending to foul Practice, and playing upon the Weakness of others.

Those who are concern'd with Persons of Eminence and Condition, must, commonly speaking, commend Imperfections, magnify vulgar Qualities, and give their Superiours a false and flattering Idea of themselves. For an Omission in these Points, will be look'd on as a rustick and envious Neglect; and which will meet with very slender Returns of Favour: No; Coldness and Disregard is the most that can be expected. But to prove this a groundless Excuse, we need only remember, that *St. Paul salutes the Saints of Caesar's Household*, without bidding them retire from Court; tho' that Emperour was none of the best Heathens. 'Tis plain therefore, that Greatness may be attended

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without

without sinful Compliance, and Prostitution of Conscience; and when it cannot, there are other Ways for Subsistence and Support.

Those who are concern'd in Commerce may possibly argue, that they must make use of Artifice and Cunning, they must dissemble, adulterate, and take Advantage of the Ignorance of their Neighbours, otherwise their Trade won't answer Expectation. Besides, when Cases are intricate and perplex'd, as they sometimes are, the Hurry of Business won't give them Leisure to scan and examine every moral Nicety; for Opportunities are presently slip, and won't admit of such a scrupulous Deliberation. To which it may be answer'd, that the Understanding which a Man is suppos'd to have, in his own Employment, will tell him at first sight, whether he presses too hard on his Neighbour or not: In most Cases, there needs not much study and consulting to know this; and where there does, the Enquiry is not so trivial, as such busy Men would make it: No wise Man, that believes his Life or Estate in Danger, will pretend

pretend he's too much employ'd to take care of them. Now, the Observance of Justice is an indispensable Duty, and therefore if our everlasting Condition be worth the minding, we are concern'd to examine, whether our Practice is agreeable to Equity or not. Those that pretend they can't make a creditable Provision for themselves, without Recourse to indirect Means: for that this Objection is made and allow'd, (tho' not spoken out,) is evident, because it's too often practis'd: Now, if Men must have their Circumstances plentiful, according to the vulgar Notion of these things, if they are resolv'd to make a Figure in the World, it must be granted, this cannot always be done, without Injustice and Circumvention: To compass this Point, they must sometimes charge through Breach of Honour, and good Faith; clear Dealing must be given up, and Integrity pay the Purchase. For, as the Apostle tells us, *That they that will* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. *be rich, fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which draw Men in Destruction*



*and Perdition, for the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil.* But then, what Necessity is there for all this? Why, cannot they be contented with a moderate Condition, when Justice and Providence don't allow them to rise higher? They pretend they cannot be happy except they are better accommodated; but this is their own Fault, for our Saviour pronounces against them, and assures us, that *a Man's Life does not consist in the abundance of those things he possesses.* If Custom and false Reasoning did not enlarge the Necessities of Nature, they might all be brought into a small Compass, and we might learn, with *St. Paul, in whatsoever State we are to be content.* But strait Circumstances, some will say, are uncreditable; certainly not so much as Dishonesty: For, even in the general Opinion, a poor Man, that subsists fairly by his Labour, is thought a Person of more Value and Reputation, than he that lives splendidly upon his Revenues from the Highway; and if Men flourish by unjust Dealings, and fraudulent Manage-

ment in their Trades and Professions, the different way of Injustice in the *Shop*, does not much mend the Matter. But, is Poverty so uncreditable a State do you say? I'm afraid those that think so, would have been asham'd of our Saviour, and his Apostles, if they had convers'd with them: But if a poor Man may be just and temperate, religious and resolute in a good Cause, then he needs not grow despicable for want of Fortune; the Practice of those Verrues will gain him the Esteem of all equal Judges, yes of God Almighty himself: For, if there is any real Difference in the Merit of Persons, and any Reason to judge of it, they, and they only, are the great Men, who are Masters of such Qualities as these: In short, when a more plentiful Condition is not fairly laid in our way, is it not much better to be contented with a lower Station? To enjoy the Friendship of Heaven, and the Pleasures of a good Conscience? To keep up our Reputation with our selves, and with all wise Men, and to live in Expectation of immortal Honour and Hap-

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piners? Is it not more eligible to be in this Condition, than by unwarrantable Practices to flutter a little while in Pageantry and Tinsel? To make a Shew out of Falshood, and shine like some Wood, because 'tis rotten; and when this transient Scene is over, to sink for ever into Milery and Contempt?

To conclude, if a Man did firmly believe, that upon his yielding to a Sin, (to which he's most inclinable) he should be immediately set on the Rack, or suffer some other exquisite Torment; we need not question but such a terrible Expectation as this, would fright him out of all his Excuses, and convince him that he is powerful enough to resist the most inviting Temptation. From whence it follows, that all the Objections against God and his Laws are vain and pretended: 'Tis plain, therefore, that nothing but want of Christian Belief, ill-manag'd Appetite, and Liberty without Restraint, makes Conduct miscarry. These are the fatal Tempers, the irresistible Passions, the infectious Company, so much complain'd of;

of: Thus Precaution is never call'd in, Reason's run away with, and Conscience laid asleep; and thus we are made Prize of, and master'd, as Temptations come up. Since, therefore, we cannot plead Incapacity, *seeing God's Ways are equal and ours unequal*, since *he is justified in his Sayings and clear when he is judged*; since we cannot excuse our Sins, there remains nothing, but that we should heartily repent of those that are past, beg God's enabling Grace, and guard with more Vigilance for the future. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.







## SERMON XIII.

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ACTS XX. 35.

*It is more blessed to give, than to receive.*



THESE Words of our blessed Saviour are not mention'd by any of the Evangelists; the Gospel of St. *John*, and probably that of St. *Mark*, being not written when St. *Paul* cited them. He must therefore either receive them as an *Oral Tradition* from the Apostles, or else from him who gave him the Instructions of his Office, and communicated his Gospel to him,

him, which he declares he did *not receive from Men, but was taught it by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* But notwithstanding the first Conveyers of this remarkable Sentence are uncertain, the Author is unquestionable; the Apostle plainly affirming, that it was spoken by our blessed Saviour. The Words are to be expounded according to the Measures and Limitations of other proverbial and sententious Sayings in Scripture; not as if they would hold in that full Latitude, which Grammar and the Sound of the Words will allow. The Meaning only is, that the Nature of Things and Persons, of Causes and Events, are usually such, that generally speaking it is more blessed, or happy to *give*, than to *receive*: Generally speaking, I say, upon a due Balance of Circumstances, and a Supposal of right Qualifications: For otherwise, if he that gives, does it out of a Principle of Interest or Vain-glory, to gain a Reputation, or strengthen a Faction; if he does it to encroach upon the Liberties of the Obligated, to upbraid him  
with

with his Necessities, to betray him into any sinful Compliance, and make him obnoxious to his Humour; where the Case stands thus, a grateful and benevolent Receiver is much a greater Man than such a pretended Benefactor. Such scandalous Reserves as these, are enough to take off the Value, and null the Obligation of the largest Distributions. If a Man should give away a Kingdom upon such narrow Considerations, none were obliged to thank him for it; because his Good will did not go along with his Bounty; he did not intend his Neighbour's Benefit but his Own. His only Motive was Vanity, Self-design, or Ill-nature; so that what he parts with, is properly but Merchandize and Stratagem; and therefore tho' he gives all his Goods to the Poor, in the Account of God and Reason, *he is nothing*. He will never be the better for it, tho' others may. But if we suppose the Giver and Receiver (purely consider'd as such) to be both free from ill Principle and moral Indisposition; if we consider the general State and Event

Event of Things, we shall find that 'tis more blessed to *give* than to *receive*. Which will appear from a more distinct Consideration of the Words; from which I shall endeavour to prove these following Things.

That the Circumstances of the *Giver* are more desirable than those of the *Receiver*;

I. Because Giving includes more Perfection in it, and is a more secure and honourable Condition.

II. That Giving is more eligible than *Receiving*; because, generally speaking, 'tis a clearer Evidence of a noble and virtuous Disposition.

III. That the *Giver* has the Advantage, because Charity is a nobler Virtue than Gratitude, and will be more considered in the other World.

IV. Because there is more Pleasure in *Giving* than *Receiving*.

I. The Condition of the *Giver* is more desirable, because it includes more Perfection in't. 'Tis a Sign of Sufficiency and Power. Men generally understand

that



that the Law of Self-Preservation allows them to furnish themselves with something more than the bare Necessaries of Life, before they are oblig'd to be much serviceable to their Neighbours: That tho' they are bound to love others as well as themselves, yet not better: Nay they think that if their Abilities are not large enough to divide between their Neighbours Necessities and their own, in most Cases they may lawfully prefer themselves. And without question, if Men stated the Case fairly, and counted nothing necessary but what is really so, they might be allow'd to practice by this Opinion, Now according to this general Notion, he that gives to another seems to be well provided for himself: He is suppos'd able, not only to defray the necessary Charge of Life, and answer the just Importunities of Nature, but to have a Superfluity of Power to bestow at Pleasure and Discretion. He that *gives*, looks like a full Being, whose Abilities are not wholly exhausted upon it self; but like a swelling River, after it hath fill'd its own Chanel

Chanel, overflows its Banks, and relieves the Barrenness of the neighbouring Ground. Whereas *Receiving* implies Want and Weakness, empty Spaces, and unsatisfy'd Desires, which a Man can't content and furnish himself, but must depend upon the arbitrary Assistance of others. The Giver resembles a fruitful Country, which has all the Conveniencies of Life within it self, and subsists upon the Product of its own Growth; whereas he that receives must undergo the Labour and Hazard of a long Voyage, and the Uneasiness of a foreign Commerce and Conversation. Farther, Giving includes Choice; for what a Man parts with to another, he may keep for himself: He has the Freedom to assign the Proportion of his Charity, and may reserve as much as he pleases: And if he takes his Measures too narrow, he is accountable to none but God Almighty: But the *Receiver* must not be his own Carver; he can neither warrant the Certainty, nor the Proportion of a Supply, but must depend, in the Circumstances of his Support, upon  
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the Kindness of his Neighbours. We see therefore, that Power, and an Approach to Self-sufficiency, is a very desirable Addition to any Being. Power, that great and active Attribute of God Almighty, which provides Satisfaction for the rest of his glorious Perfections. This is that which makes him the Terror of the Wicked, the Hope and Refuge of the Righteous. 'Tis his Almighty Arm, which brings his just Decrees into Effect, and makes *all his Counsel stand*. By this, he is always prepar'd to govern and judge the World in Righteousness, and to *save those to the uttermost that come to him*. Wisdom and Goodness unfortify'd by Power, are but vain Speculations, and insignificant Wishes. What does a fine and judicious Contrivance signify, unless we are able to bring it about? What are we the better for forefating an Evil, if we can't prevent it? To see Reason lie fetter'd in Impotence, and miscarry in its noble Designs; to consider that Foresight and Thought can't prevent those Evils they so clearly discover, must needs be

very afflicting to a rational Being, and make a Man unhappy in the Privilege of his Understanding: So Goodness, not seconded with Ability, is often but a melancholy Virtue to the Owner, because he finds it impossible to effect what he has so great a mind to. To have strong Affections and Compassion for others, without being able to give suitable Advantages, or deliver them from those Pressures they lie under, does but make a Man uneasy in his Good nature, and languish away his generous Being in kind Wishes and ineffectual Desires. From all which it appears, that in regard the Giver is suppos'd to have the Odds of Power in his Hand, upon this Account his Condition is more desirable than that of the Receiver.

The Condition of the Giver is most desirable, because the just Liberty of the Mind is best secured in such Circumstances. I confess, rational Beings, much more *Christians*, ought to be so great, as not to be sway'd by the Accidents of Life; so humble and resigning to Providence, as

not



not to raise or sink their Spirits by the various Successes of Things below: However, we may observe that this World has an unhappy Ascendant over the greatest Part of Mankind, their Mind usually resembling the Nature and Complexion of their Affairs. When Men believe their Circumstances well supported, this is apt to furnish them with generous Thoughts, and raises them to a certain Grandeur of Spirit: It gives them a confiding Air, and a well-assur'd Deportment; and if they have but the Discretion to avoid the Extremes of Pride and Insolence, their Actions are remarkably graceful, by having a noble Mixture of Freedom and Unconcernedness in 'em. Those who think their Accommodations not much short of their Desires, and have a competent Assurance of their Continuance, are usually free in their Sentiments, and steady in their Opinions. They need not be govern'd by a foreign Fancy and Direction: And therefore when they are so happy as to be under the Conduct of good Principles, they are in a fair Way to keep them: Whereas,

as, on the contrary, an indigent Condition sinks the Mind, and makes it anxious and diffident; it produces servile Thoughts and uncertain Resolutions. Persons in such Circumstances are not always allow'd to act by their own Reason, but have their Humour and Practice prescrib'd by others: For, being unable to support themselves, and the Favour of those who can assist being not to be gain'd without unwarrantable Compliance, if they will succeed they must sometimes dissemble and flatter, take no Notice of the Imperfections, applaud, and, it may be, imitate the Vices of their Benefactors; otherwise there's no Countenance to be expected from them: In short, they must sometimes be contented to be Slaves to the Pride and Folly of others, and run through all the dishonourable Ways of Meanness and Scandal. Not but that there are many Examples of great and immovable Spirits, of brave and remarkable Integrity: Men that have borne up against the most disadvantageous Circumstances, and scorn'd to be over-aw'd into a base and sinful Obsequiousness;

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who would not prostitute their Con-  
 sciences for Bread, nor live upon the  
 Ruins of their Honesty. And as a ne-  
 cessitous Condition does not force any  
 to transgress their Duty, so neither does  
 it excuse them when they do: As it was  
 their Choice, so it will be their De-  
 struction, if they continue in it. How-  
 ever, thus much we may conclude, that  
 Indigence is more likely to produce Ab-  
 jectness of Mind, and is a greater Tempt-  
 ation to sinful Compliance; by conse-  
 quence the Condition of the *Receiver* is  
 not so secure, not so desirable, as that of  
 the *Giver*.

3. The Condition of the *Giver* im-  
 plies an honourable Trust: God, who is  
 the chief Proprietor, has permitted an  
 unequal Distribution of the good Things  
 of this Life, both for the better Security  
 of Government, and likewise to prove  
 the Resignation of the Poor, and the  
 Justice and Humanity of the Wealthy.  
 Now those who have the greater Share  
 of the Division fallen to them, have the  
 Honour to be God's Stewards and Al-

moners;

moners; they are to dispense the Blessings of his Providence to the Needy; and almost in a literal Sense, *to give his Household their Portion of Meat in due Season.* The Poor are, as it were, Minors all their Life-time, they don't come to their Estates till the other World; and therefore God has assign'd them the Rich for their Guardians, who are to supply their Necessities, and protect them from Injury and Oppression: An honourable Employment this, by which the comfortable Subsistence of our poor Brethren is entrusted with us, and their Lives, in a manner, committed to our Care. It looks like a Testimonial of our Worth from God Almighty, as if he own'd our Sufficiency for the Discharge of this Office, and did not suspect our Integrity in the Manage of it: We should remember, therefore, that as the Trust is honourable and weighty, we are bound to perform it with a proportionable Fidelity; and that *St. Paul* has told us, that *'tis requir'd in a Steward that he be found faithful.* We should consider, that God



never gives any Person a full unconditional Propriety in his Estate, but always reserves a Rent-charge out of it for the Poor. 'Tis true, the Sum is left to the Discretion of the Owner, which as it ought to be fairly and frankly stated, so we should take Care to pay it where 'tis due; neither throwing away our Lord's Money for the Support of Sloth and Lewdness, nor over-looking any deserving Object: For, as we are not to be careless, so neither should we be too scrupulous in this Matter; for those who won't afford their Charity without a Demonstration of real and compassionate Want, seem to love Money much better than their Neighbour, and give a shrewd Suspicion they are willing to find a colourable Evasion to falsify their Trust, tho' their indigent Brother suffers never so much by it. But where we see apparent Signs of Necessity lie before us, when we have been as cautious as the Circumstances of the Occasion will permit, we should content ourselves with a fair Probability, and not stand upon too nice an Enquiry into the

Merits

Merits of the Person. To this both Duty to God and Good-nature to Men oblige us, especially considering we can't lose by such a Mistake; for if the Person happens to be unworthy, he does not cheat us, but himself. If we are but prudently careful, our Charity, which proceeds from Obedience and Compassion, will never fare the worse for the Wickedness and Hypocrisy of another.

II. A farther Meaning of the Words, and which we have reason to believe our Saviour chiefly intended, is, that *Giving* is more commendable than *Receiving*, because, generally speaking, 'tis a clearer Evidence of a noble and virtuous Disposition, and that upon these two Accounts.

1. Because 'tis a greater sign of Goodness: Indeed, it may be objected, that the *Receiver* may pretend to this Virtue as well as the other; for 'tis sometimes a Fault not to *receive*, as well as not to *give*. To refuse an Obligation, except where we have reason to suspect the Design, or the Consequence, is an Argument

ment of a haughty and unfociable Temper. To reject the Gift, supposes it either unsuitable to our Condition, or unsafe to accept: And what is this, but reproaching him that offers it with Indiscretion or Insincerity? By refusing his Kindness, we seem to undervalue his Person, and renounce his Friendship: We seem unwilling to enter into an amicable Correspondence and Familiarity with him; which Humour often proceeds from Pride, and at the best looks like a shy and un-conversable Suspiciousness. And therefore, by the Rule of Contraries, to be willing to receive, seems to argue an humble and humane Disposition: A Mind that has worthy and charitable Thoughts of Mankind; that *thinks no Evil*, but is ready upon all Occasions to enter into a strict Union and Intercourse with others. But here we must consider, that this Objection has no apparent Force but where the Condition of the Receiver is well supported, where he is able to provide for himself without the Assistance of others. For, if his Circumstances are indigent, though

though his Temper may be good, though his Inclinations may be very friendly and obliging, yet the Disadvantage of his Condition hinders these commendable Qualities from shewing themselves. His Necessity is judg'd sufficient to make him willing to come under an Obligation, without the Conjunction of other more creditable Motives; the Disadvantage of his Circumstances makes his *Receiving* look more like a Kindness to himself, than to his Neighbour. But to *give*, when there are no visible Marks of an ill Intention, is a fair Indication of a rich and benevolent Disposition; 'tis a generous Exercise of Power; it shews that we wish Mankind happy by endeavouring to make them so. What can be a more convincing Proof of the tender and compassionate Sense we have of the Afflictions of others, than to part with some of our Conveniencies to remove them? Now, of all moral Excellencies, Goodness is the most endearing; 'tis the most valuable and charming Quality, which 'tis possible for any Being to have. *For a good* Rom. v. 7.



*Man, says the Apostle, some would dare to die. 'Tis this glorious Perfection in God Almighty, which renders the Loving him with all our Heart, and with all our Strength, so just and so reasonable a Duty; and makes it, as the Psalmist speaks, a joyful thing to be thankful.*

2. *Giving* is a better Evidence of a virtuous Disposition, because 'tis a Sign of a greater Disengagement from the World. *Receiving* may consist well enough with covetous Desires, with a narrow and anxious Mind, with Distrust of Providence, and an over-valuing Opinion of the Things of this Life. He that *receives* may have all these ignoble Qualities; I don't mean that he has them, but that there is nothing to the contrary imply'd in the Act of *Receiving*. But, on the other side, to contribute freely to worthy and charitable Designs, is a good Argument of a great and religious Mind; a Mind that has honourable Thoughts of Providence; that relies upon it; and is secure and unconcern'd about the Events of this Life. Such a Person seems to understand

understand the true Use of this World, and to have no more than a just Value for it. He will not be govern'd and made a Slave by his Fortune, but is resolv'd to make Use on't for the Purposes it was given, and chuses rather to live charitably than die rich. He that *forgets not* Heb. xiii. 16. to do Good, and communicate, gives us a fair Assurance that *his Conversation is in Heaven*. That he has made a higher Choice, and is in Pursuit of nobler Objects than are to be met with here. For, if he aim'd at nothing but this World, we have Reason to believe he would never part so freely with it: But when the Abilities of the *Giver* are small; when he has nothing but his Labour and Industry to depend upon; when, as St. Paul testifies of the *Macedonians*, Men are *willing* 2 Cor. iii. 3. not only to their Power, but beyond it; and like the Widow in the Gospel, cast, as it were, *their whole Living* into the Poors Treasury: This is an undeniable Evidence of the Benevolence and Devotion of their Temper; that they have a worthy Apprehension of God, and are

are generously inclined towards their Neighbours.

Matth.  
xxv. 34.

III. Supposing right Qualifications in both Conditions, the Advantage lies on the Giver's side, because Charity is a nobler Virtue than Gratitude, and will be more consider'd in the other World. Our blessed Saviour, where he tells us that *those on his Right Hand shall be called to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them*, gives us the Reason of this Invitation, because they had *fed the Hungry, and cloathed the Naked*, and administer'd Comfort and Relief to those who were in Distress. He does not say, you have been grateful to your Benefactors, remember'd their good Deeds, and prayed for them; therefore come into the Kingdom prepared for you. Tho' these Returns are undoubtedly Virtues, yet the rewarding Sentence is not founded upon these. Neither shall we wonder to find Charity prefer'd to Gratitude, if we consider that according to the general Temper of Mankind, the Exercise of it has usually more Difficulty, and the Effects of

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it are more beneficial. A Man may be grateful, without being at the Expence of any thing but a little Pride; he loses nothing but a stubborn Humour, which is usually so far mortify'd by strait Circumstances, that People can part with it without much Trouble. The Acknowledging a Kindness is so far from lessening any one's Fortune, that it rather gives him a Prospect of increasing it. But he that gives in any considerable Measure, parts with a real Advantage, and is at present so much the Poorer by it. Now, in regard the good things of this Life are in our Possession, and agreeable to our present Inclinations; for these Reasons, Men find some Difficulty to part with them, unless they have a strong Sense of Duty upon them, and their Hearts are enlarged by religious Considerations. Besides, to be charitable, is much more necessary to the support of Mankind, than to be grateful. For Gratitude is usually due to the wealthy and powerful, who, tho' their Favours should not be acknowledg'd, are able to provide for themselves. But Charity respects the

Poor



Poor and Needy, who absolutely depend upon its Assistance: Ingratitude only disappoints and disquiets, when Uncharitableness starves. A Man loses nothing but his Expectation by the one, but his Life is in Danger by the other.

Lastly, Gratitude seems to be commanded upon the Account of Charity, and therefore must be inferior to it. To be grateful, is a Virtue chiefly, because such a Disposition encourages the Wealthy to assist their Neighbours. Men are not generally arriv'd at such a disinterested Pitch of Virtue, as to give purely out of Principles of Humanity. Nay, tho' they believe they shall be rewarded for what they do, yet they are not willing to stay for the whole Return of their Charity till the other World. Unless they have some present Payment in Respect and Acknowledgment, they are apt to be discouraged, and grow weary of *Well-doing*; but a just Sense of their Favours supports their charitable Disposition, and invires it to proceed: A grateful Return convinces them, that they were

not mistaken in their Object, and is moreover an Acknowledgment of their good Nature and Ability: Now, such Thoughts as these Men are willing others should have of them. Since, therefore, Gratitude is chiefly enjoin'd to promote Charity, it must be own'd inferior to it; and consequently, as the Virtue of the Giver has a fairer Tryal than that of the Receiver, so 'tis likewise of a higher Order.

4. Another Reason why *'tis more blessed to give than to receive*, is because there's more Pleasure in't; and that, to mention nothing farther, upon the Score of its making us instrumental in promoting the Good of others. The charitable Person, when his Fortune bears any Proportion with the largeness of his Mind, is the great and universal Remedy against the Calamities of Life: He is as it were a *Father to the Fatherless, Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé*; he is Liberty to the Captive, and if not Health, yet Ease and Refreshment to the Sick. Now, to be able in some Measure

to remove Want, and Pain, and Diseases out of the World; to make the Minds of the Needy more chearful, and their Bodies more serviceable to them; to do this must needs be no ordinary Satisfaction to a well-disposed Mind. What a strange Alteration do we see in a poor Man, when he receives a liberal Alms at the Hand, or a Refreshment at the Table of another? All Sense of his former Want seems quite forgotten: His Voice, and Looks, and Motion, are animated with Joy, and have the very Mein and Image of Contentment in them: He seems to be made over again, and to have fresh Ingredients of Happiness throw into his Composition. 'Tis not unusual to see such a Person more transported with the receiving a few Pence, than another is with the News of an Estate. And, must it not be very entertaining, to abate, if not to extinguish the Misery of one of our own Nature, and to communicate Pleasure at so cheap a rate? One would think a Man could not lay out his Money so much to his Satisfaction any other Way.

Way. It must needs be a mighty Pleasure  
to a good Man to be in a Capacity of  
making others Happy. For, by doing  
this, he gratifies his Inclinations, and  
compasses that which he so much desires.  
By putting others into a good Condition,  
he secures and improves his own: For by  
making others easy, and lessening the  
Inconveniencies of Mankind, he so far  
prevents the Interruption of his own  
Happiness, which would otherwise suffer  
by Pity and Compassion. And the kind  
Affection he has for his Neighbour, makes  
him *rejoyce with them that rejoyce*, and  
count another's Happiness his own. To  
do good is very delightful, because by  
this we are assured our Mind is generous  
and humane, that is in its right Constitu-  
tion; that Covetousness, Malice, and  
Envy, do not bear Rule within us; but  
that we are free from the Shame and  
Disturbance of such uneasy and scandalous  
Passions. By this we are conscious that  
we are of the same Temper with God  
himself; which is the greatest Honour  
we are capable of; and if we are like  
him,



him, we may be sure we must be acceptable to him, and that he will own his Approbation of us in our unspeakable Reward. To which we may add, that the Matter of a Benefaction often continues but a little while. An Alms may be soon spent and gone, and the Receiver in Distress for want of another; but the Advantage of him that gave it, is not of so frail and short-liv'd a Nature: The Pleasure of a charitable Action keeps us Company all along in this World, and in the next too. 'Tis turn'd as it were into the Substance of the Soul, and is as immortal as the *Will* from whence it proceeded: It has a happy Influence upon all Sorts of Accidents and Conditions. It doubles our Prosperity, and supports our Adversity, makes us enjoy our Life, and be less surpriz'd at the Approach of Death. Indeed, the Pleasure the charitable Man is entertain'd with here, and the Reward promised him afterwards, is so great, that it may be objected we perfectly misunderstand and miscall Things: For, properly speaking, those that are *reliev'd* are the Benefactors.

tors. The greatest Obligation comes from the Needy. 'Tis they that are the Occasion of a far greater Advantage to their Neighbour, than what they receive from him. So that when the Gain is computed on both Sides, the *Receiver* looks most like the charitable Person: From whence it will follow, that the Poor ought rather to be importuned, than deny'd; and that we should be more forward to offer them our Assistance, than they are to ask it. To this it may be reply'd; that these Advantages do not come from the Receiver, and depend upon him: Tho' if he is a good Man, his Prayers are no mean Requital: But to return, the great Advantages of Charity proceed chiefly from the Goodness of God, who is pleased to entail so great a Reward upon it; and partly from the Generousness of the Giver, who delights in doing Good, and making others happy: And therefore, next to God, he is the Author of his own Pleasure; which does not depend upon the Qualifications of him he relieves, but springs from the noble Disposition of his

own Mind. However, the Objection has Truth enough in it to excite us to Charity, and to make us cherish the Poor for our own Sakes, as well as theirs, who, as the Apostle speaks, are happy Occasions of *making many Rich.*

*Lastly*, Another Advantage of *Giving*, is, that it will enlarge the Generosity of our Minds, and make us more dispos'd to endeavour the Good of others. The Exercise of this Virtue will not only, like other Habits, grow easy upon Custom, and disengage us from narrow Principles; but there is a particular Reason why we should improve under the Practice of it: For 'tis natural for Men to love those they have obliged. They look upon them as it were Creatures of their own making: And therefore they love to pursue their Point, and second one Kindness with another. Should they cease to oblige, this would seem to reflect upon their first Choice, and call their Discretion in Question. They might fear what they had bestowed already, would be in a great Measure lost: That others might suspect the

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the Largeness of their Mind began to draw in, and contract itself to a private Interest. Love is observed to descend more forcibly from the Parents to the Children, than to move the other Way. And why so? Because they look upon them as Beings derived from themselves; because they grew up into Strength and Reason under their Care and Protection: And thus they rejoice in the Effects of their own Power and Kindness, and imagine themselves to flourish in their Offspring. To apply this: The *Receiver*, if he is not of a very humble and Christian Temper, if the Obligation was not conferred with Frankness and good Humour, he won't find himself in any forward Disposition towards Gratitude; for there's nothing more certain than that the owning of Impotence and Dependence, which is imply'd in the Relation to a Benefactor, makes some People abate in their Affection towards him. But the obliging Person has a delightful Prospect of his Condition; he views himself ornamented with Power and Goodness; which is a



strong Motive to encourage his Charity and Beneficence, because he finds himself magnify'd by it. And the farther Advances he makes in the Exercise of this Virtue, the more he raises the Elevation of his Character, and promotes his own Considerableness.

I might now offer something in order to the directing us in the Exercise of our Charity; as,

1. That it ought not to be done out of a Principle of Ostentation.

2. It ought not to be accompanied with any Signs of Pride, or Disaffection to the Party relieved.

3. We should not upbraid those we have been charitable to.

4. We should take Care to place our Charity upon deserving Objects.

But these Particulars are too large to be insisted on; I shall therefore briefly infer something from the Text, and so conclude.

1. Those who are in a Condition of supplying the Necessities of others, are bound to do it, otherwise they are guilty of

of Breach of Trust. They were enabled by God Almighty for this Purpose : Their Wealth was given them upon this Condition ; and if they have not been faithful in the Discharge of their Duty, they must expect to give a severe Account of their Ill-management. But because I have already spoken something to this Particular, I shall pass,

2. To a *second* Inference, *viz.* That those who are Rich, are oblig'd to Moderation in the Management of their Fortune ; that so they may contribute more liberally to those that need.

Indeed, was there no such thing as Want and Necessity in the World ; was every one furnished with the Conveniences of Life ; did Affairs stand thus, Men might be better permitted a more indulgent Use of their Wealth ; Then, provided they did not fall into any vicious Excesses, they might be allowed to entertain their Appetites at a more expensive Rate, and to please themselves a little with the Glitter of State and Magnificence : For though a strong Propensity

to the Pleasures of Sense, and an affected Ostentation of Riches, would be an Argument of a weak Mind; yet others would not have been the worse for such an Extravagance. But now, since we have the Poor always with us, since there are so many in indigent, unsupported Circumstances; now to prefer the Vanity of our Desires to the Necessities of our Brethren, is both unjust and inhumane. What can be more unaccountable, than to throw away our Wealth upon empty and insignificant Shew, (for in private Persons 'tis no better) when there's so much Misery in the World, so many Misfortunes, which might be removed, or abated by us? And as there's nothing more unreasonable and unrighteous, than to spend the Patrimony of the Poor upon Luxury and Pride; so it likewise deprives us of the great Pleasure of a charitable Disposition. Such a Person can't conclude that he has either the Favour of God, or the Esteem of Men; the Belief of which is one of the greatest Supports, one of the most agreeable Entertainments to a rational

rational Mind. On the contrary, if he has but Sense and Impartiality enough to examine his own Actions and Temper; when he considers how selfish and narrow-spirited he is, how void of the proper Tenderness and Generosity of his Kind; when he considers this, I say, he'll find himself sunk into Meanness beyond the Help of Title and Fortune; and that all the Advantages of the World can't in Justice give him a creditable Opinion of himself.

3. And lastly. Those who are *Receivers* ought not to murmur against the Providence of God; and be discontented with their Condition. That the *Giver's* Circumstances are more desirable, must be granted for the Reasons above-mention'd. But to draw the Balance towards an Evenness, we may add, that as the *Receiver's* Condition is not so liable to some Vices, so neither has he so large an Account to give up afterwards. For, as our Saviour tells us, that *he to whom much is given, of him much will be required;* <sup>Luke xii. 48.</sup> so he whose Trust is small, will have the less



less of Stock and Improvement to answer for. Besides, by his Acknowledgments, good Wishes and Prayers, he has a fair Opportunity of discharging the Debt, and returning the Obligation upon the most considerable Benefactor.

As for Dependence, which all Mankind have an Aversion to, an Aversion, I believe, rather out of native Greatness, than Pride. This unacceptable Attendant of a low Condition, is not so peculiar to it, as to be the poor Man's Fate only.

Dependence is an Inconvenience which pursues the indigent and defenceless State of humane Nature in general. There's no Strength of Circumstances Proof against it, no Height of Station perfectly above it. As long as Men carry these frail Bodies about them, they must stand in need of a foreign Assistance: They must sometimes be subject to ill Usage, and lie at the Mercy of a false uncompassionate and unreasonable Temper. But when we have nothing but Soul and Spirit to take care of, nothing but a Being which is able to maintain it self, which subsists on the Richness

Richness of its own Nature, and is impregnable against Assault: When *this* <sup>1 Cor. xv.</sup>  
*Mortal shall have put on Immortality;* <sup>54.</sup>  
 when it shall be no longer liable to Want, and expos'd to Injury; then all the Causes of Dependence will vanish and fall off; and Men in the most comprehensive Sense will be *translated into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.* For notwithstanding the Saints will have different Degrees of Glory, yet this Distinction will not subject those of the lowest Order to the Command of a superior Quality. For the Apostle tells us, that then *all Rule and Authority shall be put down,* <sup>1 Cor. xv.</sup>  
*and God shall be all in all.* <sup>28.</sup> Indeed, in this World, where Weakness, and Vice, and Passion, are so frequent and troublesome, Government and Subordination are of absolute necessity. But in Heaven, all Men will be rais'd to such a Pitch of Virtue and Understanding, that they may be safely trusted with the Disposal of themselves, and allow'd to be independent of each other: Which noble State of Freedom must very much endear the Society

Richness

of that Place, and increase the Happiness  
of those who have the Honour to make  
Part of it. *Which God of his infinite  
Mercy grant, &c.*

*Preach'd at White-Hall,  
April 19, 1687.*

F I N I S.



